

RECORD COPY

PCT  
REQUEST

corrected  
by RO/US  
p. 21

The undersigned requests that the present international application be processed according to the Patent Cooperation Treaty.

For receiving Office use only	
International Patent No.	99 / 2 08 20
International Filing Date	13 SEP 1999 (13.09.99)
PCT INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION RO/US	
Name of receiving Office and "PCT International Application"	
Applicant's or agent's file reference (if desired) (12 characters maximum) LUM-100-A-PC	

Box No. I TITLE OF INVENTION	
Robotically Operated Laser Head	
Box No. II APPLICANT	
Name and address: (Family name followed by given name; for a legal entity, full official designation. The address must include postal code and name of country. The country of the address indicated in this Box is the applicant's State (that is, country) of residence if no State of residence is indicated below.)	
GSI Lumonics 19776 Haggerty Road Livonia, MI 48152-1016 ▲US	
<input type="checkbox"/> This person is also inventor. Telephone No. 1-734-591-0101 Facsimile No. Teleprinter No.	
State (that is, country) of nationality:	State (that is, country) of residence:
U.S. ▲US	U.S. ▲US
This person is applicant for the purposes of: <input type="checkbox"/> all designated States <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> all designated States except the United States of America <input type="checkbox"/> the United States of America only <input type="checkbox"/> the States indicated in the Supplemental Box	
Box No. III FURTHER APPLICANT(S) AND/OR (FURTHER) INVENTOR(S)	
Name and address: (Family name followed by given name; for a legal entity, full official designation. The address must include postal code and name of country. The country of the address indicated in this Box is the applicant's State (that is, country) of residence if no State of residence is indicated below.)	
Hermann, Gerald F. 34415 Fairchild Westland, MI 48186 ▲US	
This person is: <input type="checkbox"/> applicant only <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> applicant and inventor <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> inventor only (If this check-box is marked, do not fill in below.)	
State (that is, country) of nationality:	State (that is, country) of residence:
U.S. ▲US	U.S. ▲US
This person is applicant for the purposes of: <input type="checkbox"/> all designated States <input type="checkbox"/> all designated States except the United States of America <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> the United States of America only <input type="checkbox"/> the States indicated in the Supplemental Box	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Further applicants and/or (further) inventors are indicated on a continuation sheet.	
Box No. IV AGENT OR COMMON REPRESENTATIVE; OR ADDRESS FOR CORRESPONDENCE	
The person identified below is hereby/has been appointed to act on behalf of the applicant(s) before the competent International Authorities as: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> agent <input type="checkbox"/> common representative	
Name and address: (Family name followed by given name; for a legal entity, full official designation. The address must include postal code and name of country.)	
Watson, Dean B. Weintraub & Brady, P.C. 30200 Telegraph Road-Suite 444 Bingham Farms, MI 48025 U.S. ▲US	
Telephone No. 248-258-5590 Facsimile No. 248-258-6791 Teleprinter No.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Address for correspondence: Mark this check-box where no agent or common representative is/has been appointed and the space above is used instead to indicate a special address to which correspondence should be sent.	

RO/US  
DELETED BY RO/US

# 17

## PCT

IPEA

PCT

## INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION REPORT

(PCT Article 36 and Rule 70)

15

Applicant's or agent's file reference LUM-100-A-PC	<b>FOR FURTHER ACTION</b> See Notification of Transmittal of International Preliminary Examination Report (Form PCT/IPEA/416)	
International application No. PCT/US99/20820	International filing date (day/month/year) 09 SEPTEMBER 1999	Priority date (day/month/year) 09 SEPTEMBER 1998
International Patent Classification (IPC) or national classification and IPC IPC(7): B23K 26/02, 26/14 and US Cl.: 219/121.75, 121.84		
Applicant GSI LUMONICS		

1. This international preliminary examination report has been prepared by this International Preliminary Examining Authority and is transmitted to the applicant according to Article 36.

2. This REPORT consists of a total of 4 sheets.

☒ This report is also accompanied by ANNEXES, i.e., sheets of the description, claims and/or drawings which have been amended and are the basis for this report and/or sheets containing rectifications made before this Authority. (see Rule 70.16 and Section 607 of the Administrative Instructions under the PCT).

These annexes consist of a total of 0 sheets.

3. This report contains indications relating to the following items:

- I ☒ Basis of the report
- II ☐ Priority
- III ☐ Non-establishment of report with regard to novelty, inventive step or industrial applicability
- IV ☐ Lack of unity of invention
- V ☒ Reasoned statement under Article 35(2) with regard to novelty, inventive step or industrial applicability; citations and explanations supporting such statement
- VI ☐ Certain documents cited
- VII ☐ Certain defects in the international application
- VIII ☐ Certain observations on the international application

Date of submission of the demand 03 APRIL 2000	Date of completion of this report 28 NOVEMBER 2000
Name and mailing address of the IPEA/US Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks Box PCT Washington, D.C. 20231	Authorized officer SAMUEL HEINRICH DEBORAH THOMAS PARALEGAL SPECIALIST <i>Dact</i>
Facsimile No. (703) 305-3230	Telephone No. (703) 308-0661

## I. Basis of the report

## 1. With regard to the elements of the international application:\*

☒ the international application as originally filed☒ the description:

pages 1-19

pages NONE

pages NONE

, as originally filed

, filed with the demand

, filed with the letter of

☒ the claims:

pages 20-25

pages NONE

pages NONE

pages NONE

, as amended (together with any statement) under Article 19

, filed with the demand

, filed with the letter of

☒ the drawings:

pages 1-5

pages NONE

pages NONE

, as originally filed

, filed with the demand

, filed with the letter of

☒ the sequence listing part of the description:

pages NONE

pages NONE

pages NONE

, as originally filed

, filed with the demand

, filed with the letter of

2. With regard to the language, all the elements marked above were available or furnished to this Authority in the language in which the international application was filed, unless otherwise indicated under this item.  
These elements were available or furnished to this Authority in the following language \_\_\_\_\_ which is:☐ the language of a translation furnished for the purposes of international search (under Rule 23.1(b)).☐ the language of publication of the international application (under Rule 48.3(b)).☐ the language of the translation furnished for the purposes of international preliminary examination (under Rules 55.2 and/or 55.3).

## 3. With regard to any nucleotide and/or amino acid sequence disclosed in the international application, the international preliminary examination was carried out on the basis of the sequence listing:

☐ contained in the international application in printed form.☐ filed together with the international application in computer readable form.☐ furnished subsequently to this Authority in written form.☐ furnished subsequently to this Authority in computer readable form.☐ The statement that the subsequently furnished written sequence listing does not go beyond the disclosure in the international application as filed has been furnished.☐ The statement that the information recorded in computer readable form is identical to the written sequence listing has been furnished.4. ☒ The amendments have resulted in the cancellation of:☒ the description, pages NONE☒ the claims, Nos. NONE☒ the drawings, sheets/figs NONE5. ☐ This report has been drawn as if (some of) the amendments had not been made, since they have been considered to go beyond the disclosure as filed, as indicated in the Supplemental Box (Rule 70.2(c)).\*\*

\* Replacement sheets which have been furnished to the receiving Office in response to an invitation under Article 14 are referred to in this report as "originally filed" and are not annexed to this report since they do not contain amendments (Rules 70.16 and 70.17).

\*\*Any replacement sheet containing such amendments must be referred to under item 1 and annexed to this report.

# INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION REPORT

International application No.

PCT/US99/20820

## V. Reasoned statement under Article 35(2) with regard to novelty, inventive step or industrial applicability; citations and explanations supporting such statement

### 1. statement

Novelty (N)

Claims 1-17, 20-22, 24-26, 28-30

YES

Claims 18, 19, 23, 27

NO

Inventive Step (IS)

Claims 24-26, 28-30

YES

Claims 1-23, 27

NO

Industrial Applicability (IA)

Claims 1-30

YES

Claims NONE

NO

### 2. citations and explanations (Rule 70.7)

Claims 18, 19, and 23 lack novelty under PCT Article 33(2) as being anticipated by French Patent 2689254 to Gilles et al. Gilles et al show in Figure 5A the well known means for adjusting the light path and show the well known light source comprising the optical fiber.

Claims 18 and 27 lack novelty under PCT Article 33(2) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 4,707,596 to Hohberg. Hohberg describes at column 3, line 45 the well known telescopically expanding parts.

Claims 1-17 lack an inventive step under PCT Article 33(3) as being obvious over U.S. Patent No. 5,698,120 to Kurosawa et al. Applicant's preamble limitations are considered as prior art in view of the recitation of "wherein the improvement comprises". Kurosawa et al describe at column 3, lines 40-60 a laser machining system which uses recognition means for controlling the machining of the work piece based on the laser machining state recognition signal.

Claims 1-17 lack an inventive step under PCT Article 33(3) as being obvious over U.S. Patent No. 5,491,318 to Sugawara et al. Applicant's preamble limitations are considered as prior art in view of the recitation of "wherein the improvement comprises". Sugawara et al describe at column 2, lines 57-67 the well known control of a laser cutting system comprising signal sensing within a predetermined range or from contact of the head with the work in order to control operation by stopping cutting.

Claims 6-17 lack an inventive step under PCT Article 33(3) as being obvious over JP 2-235012 to Mitsubishi Heavy Industries. Applicant's preamble limitations are considered as prior art in view of the recitation of "wherein the improvement comprises". Mitsubishi Heavy Industries shows in Figure 1 the well known telescoping housing used in laser apparatus.

Claims 19-22 lack an inventive step under PCT Article 33(3) as (Continued on Supplemental Sheet.)

**Supplemental Box**

(To be used when the space in any of the preceding boxes is not sufficient)

Continuation of: Boxes I - VIII

Sheet 10

**V. 2. REASONED STATEMENTS - CITATIONS AND EXPLANATIONS (Continued):**

being obvious over U.S. Patent No. 4,668,088 to Quinque et al. Applicant's preamble limitations are considered as prior art in view of the recitation of "wherein the improvement comprises". Quinque et al describe at column 5, lines 2-7 the mobile mirror displaceable in translation and/or rotation to regulate position and orientation of the beam emitted by the laser.

Claims 19-22 lack an inventive step under PCT Article 33(3) as being obvious over U.S. Patent No. 4,707,596 to Hohberg. Applicant's preamble limitations are considered as prior art in view of the recitation of "wherein the improvement comprises". Hohberg describes at column 3, line 45 the well known telescopically expanding parts and describes at column 4, lines 30-35 the circuit evaluation of signals for controlling the mirror elements.

Claims 24-26 and 28-30 meet the criteria set out in PCT Article 33(2)-(4), because the prior art does not teach or fairly suggest the translatable fiber optic or the telescopic assist gas tube.

----- NEW CITATIONS -----

NONE

## PATENT COOPERATION TREATY

## PCT

REC'D 14 NOV 2001

WIPO

PCT

## INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION REPORT

(PCT Article 36 and Rule 70)

Applicant's or agent's file reference LUM-100-A-PCT	FOR FURTHER ACTION See Notification of Transmittal of International Preliminary Examination Report (Form PCT/IPEA/416)	
International application No. PCT/US99/20820	International filing date (day/month/year) 09 September 1999 (09.09.1999)	Priority date (day/month/year) 09 September 1998 (09.09.1998)
International Patent Classification (IPC) or national classification and IPC IPC(7): B23K 26/02, 26/14 and US Cl.: 219/121.75, 121.84		
Applicant GSI LUMONICS		
<p>1. This international preliminary examination report has been prepared by this International Preliminary Examining Authority and is transmitted to the applicant according to Article 36.</p> <p>2. This REPORT consists of a total of <u>3</u> sheets, including this cover sheet.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> This report is also accompanied by ANNEXES, i.e., sheets of the description, claims and/or drawings which have been amended and are the basis for this report and/or sheets containing rectifications made before this Authority (see Rule 70.16 and Section 607 of the Administrative Instructions under the PCT).</p> <p>These annexes consist of a total of <u>5</u> sheets.</p>		
<p>3. This report contains indications relating to the following items:</p> <p>I <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Basis of the report</p> <p>II <input type="checkbox"/> Priority</p> <p>III <input type="checkbox"/> Non-establishment of report with regard to novelty, inventive step and industrial applicability</p> <p>IV <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of unity of invention</p> <p>V <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reasoned statement under Article 35(2) with regard to novelty, inventive step or industrial applicability; citations and explanations supporting such statement</p> <p>VI <input type="checkbox"/> Certain documents cited</p> <p>VII <input type="checkbox"/> Certain defects in the international application</p> <p>VIII <input type="checkbox"/> Certain observations on the international application</p>		
Date of submission of the demand 03 April 2000 (03.04.2000)	Date of completion of this report 16 October 2001 (16.10.2001)	
Name and mailing address of the IPEA/US Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks Box PCT Washington, D.C. 20231 Facsimile No. (703)305-3230	Authorized officer Samuel M. Heinrich Telephone No. 703 308 0651	

Form PCT/IPEA/409 (cover sheet)(July 1998)

RECEIVED

FEB 13 2002

TC 1700

CORRECTED  
VERSION

## INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION REPORT

International application No.

PCT/US99/20820

**I. Basis of the report**1. With regard to the **elements** of the international application:\*☐ the international application as originally filed.☒ the description:

pages 1-19 \_\_\_\_\_ as originally filed

pages NONE \_\_\_\_\_, filed with the demandpages NONE \_\_\_\_\_, filed with the letter of \_\_\_\_\_☒ the claims:pages NONE \_\_\_\_\_, as originally filedpages NONE \_\_\_\_\_, as amended (together with any statement) under Article 19pages NONE \_\_\_\_\_, filed with the demandpages 20-24 \_\_\_\_\_, filed with the letter of 21 SEPTEMBER 2000 \_\_\_\_\_☒ the drawings:

pages 1-5 \_\_\_\_\_, as originally filed

pages NONE \_\_\_\_\_, filed with the demandpages NONE \_\_\_\_\_, filed with the letter of \_\_\_\_\_☐ the sequence listing part of the description:pages NONE \_\_\_\_\_, as originally filedpages NONE \_\_\_\_\_, filed with the demandpages NONE \_\_\_\_\_, filed with the letter of \_\_\_\_\_2. With regard to the **language**, all the elements marked above were available or furnished to this Authority in the language in which the international application was filed, unless otherwise indicated under this item.

These elements were available or furnished to this Authority in the following language \_\_\_\_\_ which is:

☐ the language of a translation furnished for the purposes of international search (under Rule 23.1(b)).☐ the language of publication of the international application (under Rule 48.3(b)).☐ the language of the translation furnished for the purposes of international preliminary examination (under Rules 55.2 and/or 55.3).3. With regard to any **nucleotide and/or amino acid sequence** disclosed in the international application, the international preliminary examination was carried out on the basis of the sequence listing:☐ contained in the international application in printed form.☐ filed together with the international application in computer readable form.☐ furnished subsequently to this Authority in written form.☐ furnished subsequently to this Authority in computer readable form.☐ The statement that the subsequently furnished written sequence listing does not go beyond the disclosure in the international application as filed has been furnished.☐ The statement that the information recorded in computer readable form is identical to the written sequence listing has been furnished.4. ☒ The amendments have resulted in the cancellation of:☐ the description, pages NONE☒ the claims, Nos. 21-30☐ the drawings, sheets/fig NONE5. ☐ This report has been established as if (some of) the amendments had not been made, since they have been considered to go beyond the disclosure as filed, as indicated in the Supplemental Box (Rule 70.2(c)).\*\*

\* Replacement sheets which have been furnished to the receiving Office in response to an invitation under Article 14 are referred to in this report as "originally filed" and are not annexed to this report since they do not contain amendments (Rules 70.16 and 70.17).

\*\* Any replacement sheet containing such amendments must be referred to under item 1 and annexed to this report.

# INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION REPORT

International application No.  
PCT/US99/20820

## V. Reasoned statement under Rule 66.2(a)(ii) with regard to novelty, inventive step or industrial applicability; citations and explanations supporting such statement

### 1. STATEMENT

Novelty (N)	Claims <u>1-20</u>	YES
	Claims <u>NONE</u>	NO
Inventive Step (IS)	Claims <u>1-20</u>	YES
	Claims <u>NONE</u>	NO
Industrial Applicability (IA)	Claims <u>1-20</u>	YES
	Claims <u>NONE</u>	NO

### 2. CITATIONS AND EXPLANATIONS

Claims 1-20 meet the criteria set out in PCT Article 33(2) and 33(3), having novelty and inventive steps, because the prior art does not teach or fairly suggest laser devices comprising combinations of distance determining means, housing determining means, operation stopping means, operating mode sensing means, and crash detection selection and communication means, and the prior art does not teach or fairly suggest laser heads comprising combinations of a telescoping housing and a telescoping assist gas delivery tube inside the telescoping housing, and the prior art does not teach or fairly suggest laser heads comprising a light path adjusting device translatably supported by a housing and a receiving optic translatably supported to adjust the light path along first and second axes to center the laser beam with the tip, the light source comprising an optical fiber which is translatable and separated from the receiving optic. Claims 1-20 meet the criteria set out in PCT Article 33(4), having industrial applicability, because the subject matter as claimed can be made and used in industry.

----- NEW CITATIONS -----





CLAIMS

1  
2  
3 1. In a laser device of the type having a laser head and a robot, the laser head  
4 being mounted to the robot, the laser head having a housing, a focal lens disposed within  
5 the housing, a light source in optical communication with the focal lens, a nozzle disposed  
6 within the housing, and a nozzle tip disposed within the nozzle having a sensor, the laser  
7 device having means for multiple operating modes wherein the improvement comprises:

8 (a) means for determining the distance the laser head is operating at above a  
9 surface of a workpiece;

10 (b) means for determining the position of the housing at either an extended  
11 limit, a retracted limit, or an intermediate predetermined position above a workpiece;

12 (c) means for stopping the operation of the laser device to avoid damage to the  
13 laser device in response to the means for determining when the housing is at either the  
14 retracted limit, the extended limit, or at the intermediate predetermined distance above a  
15 surface of a workpiece;

16 (d) means for sensing the operating mode of the laser device to determine a  
17 method of crash detection comprising the laser head and the nozzle tip sensor cooperating  
18 to signal the means for stopping; and

19 (e) means for selecting and communicating the method of crash detection to the  
20 means for stopping.

21  
22 2. The laser device of Claim 1 wherein the means for stopping the operation of  
23 the laser comprises a crash interlock, wherein the crash interlock is preferably controlled  
24 by a programmable logic controller.

25  
26 3. The laser device of Claim 1 wherein the means for stopping is operable to  
27 stop the laser device when the laser head is positioned between 0 mm to about 1mm above  
28 a surface of a workpiece.

1           4.       The laser device of Claim 1 wherein the operating mode of the laser device  
2 is selected from the group of parked, teach, run, or hold.

3           5.       The laser device of Claim 4 wherein the means for stopping is operable to  
4 stop the laser device when the laser head is positioned between 3 mm to about 6 mm above  
5 the surface of the workpiece when the operating mode of the laser device is the parked  
6 mode.

7  
8           6.       The laser device of Claim 1 wherein the means for determining the distance  
9 the laser head is operating above a surface of a workpiece further comprises means for  
10 capacitive sensing.

11  
12           7.       The laser device of Claim 1 wherein the means for means for sensing the  
13 operating mode of the laser device to determine a method of crash detection, the means for  
14 determining the distance, the means for determining the position, and the means for  
15 stopping the operation of the laser device comprises an electronic circuit.

16  
17           8.       In a laser device of the type having a laser head and a robot, the laser head  
18 being mounted to the robot, the laser head having a housing, the housing having a first  
19 body portion and a second body portion, the first body portion being telescopable with the  
20 second body portion, a focal lens disposed within the housing, a light source in optical  
21 communication with the focal lens, a nozzle disposed within the housing, and a nozzle tip  
22 disposed within the nozzle having a sensor, the laser device having means for multiple  
23 operating modes wherein the improvement comprises:

24           (a)       means for determining the distance the laser head is operating at above a  
25 surface of a workpiece;

26           (b)       means for determining the position of the telescopable housing at either an  
27 extended limit, a retracted limit, or an intermediate predetermined position above a  
28 workpiece;

29           (c)       means for stopping the operation of the laser device to avoid damage to the  
30 laser device in response to the means for determining when the telescopable housing is at

1 either the retracted limit, the extended limit, or at the intermediate predetermined distance  
2 above a surface of a workpiece;

3 (d) means for sensing the operating mode of the laser device to determine a  
4 method of crash detection comprising the laser head and the nozzle tip sensor cooperating  
5 to signal the means for stopping; and

6 (e) means for selecting and communicating the method of crash detection to the  
7 means for stopping.

8  
9 9. The laser device of Claim 8 wherein the means for stopping the operation of  
10 the laser comprises a crash interlock, wherein the crash interlock is preferably controlled  
11 by a programmable logic controller.

12  
13 10. The laser device of Claim 8 wherein the means for stopping is operable to  
14 stop the laser device when the laser head is positioned between 0 mm to about 1mm above  
15 a surface of a workpiece.

16  
17 11. The laser device of Claim 8 wherein the operating mode of the laser device  
18 is selected from the group of parked, teach, run, or hold.

19  
20 12. The laser device of Claim 11 wherein the means for stopping is operable to  
21 stop the laser device when the laser head is positioned between 3 mm to about 6 mm above  
22 the surface of the workpiece when the operating mode of the laser device is the parked  
23 mode.

24  
25 13. The laser device of Claim 8 wherein the means for determining the distance  
26 the laser head is operating above a surface of a workpiece further comprises means for  
27 capacitive sensing.

28  
29 14. The laser device of Claim 8 wherein the means for means for sensing the  
30 operating mode of the laser device to determine a method of crash detection, the means for

1 determining the distance, the means for determining the position, and the means for  
2 stopping the operation of the laser device comprises an electronic circuit.

3  
4 15. In a laser head for a robotic unit of the type having a housing, a focal lens in  
5 the housing and a light source in optical communication with the focal lens, the housing  
6 having a nozzle with a tip, wherein the improvement comprises:

7 (a) a device for adjusting a light path of a light beam directed from the light  
8 source onto a focal optic to center a focused laser beam formed by the focal optic coaxial  
9 with the tip, wherein the device is translatably supported by the housing and comprises a  
10 receiving optic for receiving the light beam, the receiving optic is translatably supported  
11 within the housing to adjust the light path of the light beam along a first axis of the housing  
12 to center the focused laser beam coaxial with the tip and is pivotally supported within the  
13 housing to adjust the light path of the light beam along a second axis of the housing to  
14 center the focused laser beam coaxial with the tip; and

15 (b) the light source having an optical fiber supported by a fiber adapter, the  
16 optical fiber being adapted to direct a light beam into the housing to the receiving optic, the  
17 optical fiber being separated from the receiving optic by a distance, the fiber adapter being  
18 translatable with the receiving optic to maintain a constant distance between the optical  
19 fiber and the receiving optic.

20  
21 16. A laser head, the laser head being mountable to a robotic unit, the laser head  
22 having a housing, a focal lens in the housing and a light source in optical communication  
23 with the focal lens wherein the improvement comprises:

24 (a) the housing being a telescopable housing; and

25 (b) a telescopable assist gas delivery tube, wherein the assist gas delivery tube  
26 is disposed within the telescopable housing.

27  
28 17. The laser head of Claim 16 wherein the laser head further comprises a  
29 nozzle attached to the housing, the nozzle having a first tapering portion, a second  
30 elongated tapering portion and a third tapering portion.

1

2           18.     In a laser head of the type being adapted to mount to a robot, the laser head  
3     having a housing, a focal lens in the housing and a light source in optical communication  
4     with the focal lens, wherein the improvement comprises:

5           (a) a means for adjusting a light path within the housing of a light beam from the  
6     light source; and

7           (b)     an assist gas delivery tube disposed within the housing, wherein the assist  
8     gas delivery tube is telescopable, and wherein the housing is telescopable.

9

10           19.     The laser head of Claim 18 further comprising an elongated nozzle attached  
11     to the housing.

12

13           20.     The laser head of Claim 18 wherein the means for adjusting further  
14     comprises a receiving optic, the receiving optic being translatably supported within the  
15     housing to adjust a light path of a light beam along a first axis of the housing and pivotally  
16     supported to adjust the light path of the light beam along a second axis of the housing onto  
17     the focal lens.

18

Continuation of Box No. III FURTHER APPLICANT(S) AND/OR (FURTHER) INVENTOR(S)

If none of the following sub-boxes is used, this sheet should be included in the request.

Name and address: (Family name followed by given name; for a legal entity, full official designation. The address must include postal code and name of country. The country of the address indicated in this Box is the applicant's State (that is, country) of residence if no State of residence is indicated below.)

Leybzun, Mark S.  
1710 Commerce Pines Circle  
Commerce, MI 48390

▲ U.S.

This person is:

☐ applicant only

▲ ☒ applicant and inventor

☒ inventor only (If this check-box is marked, do not fill in below.)

▲ ▲

State (that is, country) of nationality:

U.S. ▲ U.S.

State (that is, country) of residence:

U.S. ▲ U.S.

This person is applicant for the purposes of:

☐ all designated States

☐ all designated States except the United States of America

▲ ☒ the United States of America only

☐ the States indicated in the Supplemental Box

Name and address: (Family name followed by given name; for a legal entity, full official designation. The address must include postal code and name of country. The country of the address indicated in this Box is the applicant's State (that is, country) of residence if no State of residence is indicated below.)

This person is:

☐ applicant only

☐ applicant and inventor

☐ inventor only (If this check-box is marked, do not fill in below.)

State (that is, country) of nationality:

State (that is, country) of residence:

This person is applicant for the purposes of:

☐ all designated States

☐ all designated States except the United States of America

☐ the United States of America only

☐ the States indicated in the Supplemental Box

Name and address: (Family name followed by given name; for a legal entity, full official designation. The address must include postal code and name of country. The country of the address indicated in this Box is the applicant's State (that is, country) of residence if no State of residence is indicated below.)

This person is:

☐ applicant only

☐ applicant and inventor

☐ inventor only (If this check-box is marked, do not fill in below.)

State (that is, country) of nationality:

State (that is, country) of residence:

This person is applicant for the purposes of:

☐ all designated States

☐ all designated States except the United States of America

☐ the United States of America only

☐ the States indicated in the Supplemental Box

Name and address: (Family name followed by given name; for a legal entity, full official designation. The address must include postal code and name of country. The country of the address indicated in this Box is the applicant's State (that is, country) of residence if no State of residence is indicated below.)

This person is:

☐ applicant only

☐ applicant and inventor

☐ inventor only (If this check-box is marked, do not fill in below.)

State (that is, country) of nationality:

State (that is, country) of residence:

This person is applicant for the purposes of:

☐ all designated States

☐ all designated States except the United States of America

☐ the United States of America only

☐ the States indicated in the Supplemental Box

☐ Further applicants and/or (further) inventors are indicated on another continuation sheet.

▲ DELETED BY RO/US  
▲ RO/US

## Box No.V DESIGNATION OF STATES

The following designations are hereby made under Rule 4.9(a) (mark the applicable check-box; at least one must be marked):

## Regional Patent

- ☒ **AP ARIPO Patent:** BG Ghana, GM Gambia, KE Kenya, LS Lesotho, MW Malawi, SD Sudan, SL Sierra Leone, SZ Swaziland, UG Uganda, ZW Zimbabwe, and any other State which is a Contracting State of the Harare Protocol and of the PCT
- ☒ **EA Eurasian Patent:** AM Armenia, AZ Azerbaijan, BY Belarus, KG Kyrgyzstan, KZ Kazakhstan, MD Republic of Moldova, RU Russian Federation, TJ Tajikistan, TM Turkmenistan, and any other State which is a Contracting State of the Eurasian Patent Convention and of the PCT
- ☒ **EP European Patent:** AT Austria, BE Belgium, CH and LI Switzerland and Liechtenstein, CY Cyprus, DE Germany, DK Denmark, ES Spain, FI Finland, FR France, GB United Kingdom, GR Greece, IE Ireland, IT Italy, LU Luxembourg, MC Monaco, NL Netherlands, PT Portugal, SE Sweden, and any other State which is a Contracting State of the European Patent Convention and of the PCT
- ☒ **OA OAPI Patent:** BF Burkina Faso, BJ Benin, CF Central African Republic, CG Congo, CI Côte d'Ivoire, CM Cameroon, GA Gabon, GN Guinea, GW Guinea-Bissau, ML Mali, MR Mauritania, NE Niger, SN Senegal, TD Chad, TG Togo, and any other State which is a member State of OAPI and a Contracting State of the PCT (if other kind of protection or treatment desired, specify on dotted line) .....

## National Patent (if other kind of protection or treatment desired, specify on dotted line):

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>AE</b> United Arab Emirates                  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>LR</b> Liberia  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>AL</b> Albania                               | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>LS</b> Lesotho  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>AM</b> Armenia                               | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>LT</b> Lithuania  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>AT</b> Austria                               | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>LU</b> Luxembourg   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>AU</b> Australia                             | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>LV</b> Latvia   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>AZ</b> Azerbaijan                            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>MD</b> Republic of Moldova  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>BA</b> Bosnia and Herzegovina                | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>MG</b> Madagascar   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>BB</b> Barbados                              | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>MK</b> The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia                      |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>BG</b> Bulgaria                              |  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>BR</b> Brazil                                | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>MN</b> Mongolia   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>BY</b> Belarus                               | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>MW</b> Malawi   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>CA</b> Canada                                | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>MX</b> Mexico   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>CH and LI</b> Switzerland and Liechtenstein  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>NO</b> Norway   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>CN</b> China                                 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>NZ</b> New Zealand  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>CU</b> Cuba                                  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>PL</b> Poland   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>CZ</b> Czech Republic                        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>PT</b> Portugal   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>DE</b> Germany                               | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>RO</b> Romania  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>DK</b> Denmark                               | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>RU</b> Russian Federation   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>EE</b> Estonia                               | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>SD</b> Sudan  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>ES</b> Spain                                 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>SE</b> Sweden   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>FI</b> Finland                               | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>SG</b> Singapore  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>GB</b> United Kingdom                        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>SI</b> Slovenia   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>GD</b> Grenada                               | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>SK</b> Slovakia   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>GE</b> Georgia                               | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>SL</b> Sierra Leone   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>GH</b> Ghana                                 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>TJ</b> Tajikistan   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>GM</b> Gambia                                | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>TM</b> Turkmenistan   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>HR</b> Croatia                               | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>TR</b> Turkey   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>HU</b> Hungary                               | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>TT</b> Trinidad and Tobago  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>ID</b> Indonesia                             | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>UA</b> Ukraine  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>IL</b> Israel                                | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>UG</b> Uganda   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>IN</b> India                                 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>US</b> United States of America                                       |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>IS</b> Iceland                               |  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>JP</b> Japan                                 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>UZ</b> Uzbekistan   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>KE</b> Kenya                                 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>VN</b> Viet Nam   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>KG</b> Kyrgyzstan                            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>YU</b> Yugoslavia   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>KP</b> Democratic People's Republic of Korea | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>ZA</b> South Africa   |
|   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>ZW</b> Zimbabwe   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>KR</b> Republic of Korea                     | Check-boxes reserved for designating States which have become party to the PCT after issuance of this sheet: |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>KZ</b> Kazakhstan                            | <input type="checkbox"/> .....   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>LC</b> Saint Lucia                           | <input type="checkbox"/> .....   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>LK</b> Sri Lanka                             |  |

**Precautionary Designation Statement:** In addition to the designations made above, the applicant also makes under Rule 4.9(b) all other designations which would be permitted under the PCT except any designation(s) indicated in the Supplemental Box as being excluded from the scope of this statement. The applicant declares that those additional designations are subject to confirmation and that any designation which is not confirmed before the expiration of 15 months from the priority date is to be regarded as withdrawn by the applicant at the expiration of that time limit. (Confirmation of a designation consists of the filing of a notice specifying that designation and the payment of the designation and confirmation fees. Confirmation must reach the receiving Office within the 15-month time limit.)

## Box No. VI PRIORITY CLAIM

☐ Further priority claims are indicated in the Supplemental Box.

Filing date of earlier application (day/month/year)	Number of earlier application	Earlier application is:		
		national application: country	regional application: Regional Office	international application: receiving Office
item (1) (09.09.98) 09 September 1998	60/099,547	▲ U.S. <del>U.S.</del>	▲ <del>U.S.</del>	
item (2)				
item (3)				

☒ The receiving Office is requested to prepare and transmit to the International Bureau a certified copy of the earlier application(s) (only if the earlier application was filed with the Office which for the purposes of the present international application is the receiving Office) identified above as item(s): (1)

\* Where the earlier application is an ARIPO application, it is mandatory to indicate in the Supplemental Box at least one country party to the Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property for which that earlier application was filed (Rule 4.10(b)(ii)). See Supplemental Box.

## Box No. VII INTERNATIONAL SEARCHING AUTHORITY

**Choice of International Searching Authority (ISA)**  
(if two or more International Searching Authorities are competent to carry out the international search, indicate the Authority chosen: the two-letter code may be used):

**Request to use results of earlier search; reference to that search** (if an earlier search has been carried out by or requested from the International Searching Authority):

Date (day/month/year)

Number

Country (or regional Office)

ISA / U.S.

## Box No. VIII CHECK LIST; LANGUAGE OF FILING

This international application contains the following number of sheets:

request : 4  
description (excluding sequence listing part) : 19  
claims : 6  
abstract : 1  
drawings : 5  
sequence listing part of description : 0

Total number of sheets : 35

This international application is accompanied by the item(s) marked below:

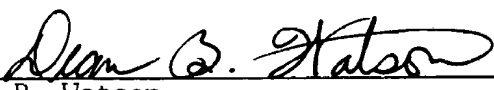
- ☒ fee calculation sheet
- ☒ separate signed power of attorney
- ☐ copy of general power of attorney; reference number, if any:
- ☐ statement explaining lack of signature
- ☐ priority document(s) identified in Box No. VI as item(s):
- ☐ translation of international application into (language):
- ☐ separate indications concerning deposited microorganism or other biological material
- ☐ nucleotide and/or amino acid sequence listing in computer readable form
- ☐ other (specify):

Figure of the drawings which should accompany the abstract: 1

Language of filing of the international application: U.S.

## Box No. IX SIGNATURE OF APPLICANT OR AGENT

Next to each signature, indicate the name of the person signing and the capacity in which the person signs (if such capacity is not obvious from reading the request).

  
Dean B. Watson  
Attorney for Applicant

9/9/99

(09.09.99)

For receiving Office use only

1. Date of actual receipt of the purported international application:	430 Rec'd PCT/PTO 09 SEP 1999	2. Drawings:  <input type="checkbox"/> received:  <input type="checkbox"/> not received:
3. Corrected date of actual receipt due to later but timely received papers or drawings completing the purported international application:		
4. Date of timely receipt of the required corrections under PCT Article 11(2):		
5. International Searching Authority (if two or more are competent): ISA / US	6. <input type="checkbox"/> Transmittal of search copy delayed until search fee is paid.	

For International Bureau use only

Date of receipt of the record copy by the International Bureau:

21 OCTOBER 1999

(21.10.99)



## ROBOTICALLY OPERATED LASER HEAD

5

### CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This is a completion application of a co-pending, prior filed U.S. provisional application S.N. 60/099,547 entitled "Laser Cutting-Head with Adjustable Light Source, Crash Avoidance System and Improved Gas Delivery System" filed September 9, 1998, the disclosure of which is herein incorporated by reference.

## BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

### I. FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention pertains to robotically operated laser cutting and welding devices. More particularly, the present invention pertains to a robotically controlled laser cutting or welding head that operates about the surface of a three dimensional workpiece.

### II. PRIOR ART

Present-day laser cutting or welding devices typically have a light source that directs light to one or more mirrors and lenses which in turn directs the light to a focal or condenser optic. The light source may be an optic fiber. The mirror and lenses or optics of the laser device are typically housed in a laser head. The laser head has a housing with a nozzle through which a laser beam is directed to impinge upon a workpiece. The operation or motion of the laser head about a workpiece may be controlled by a robot and controller or the like.

Robotically controlled laser devices are often operated under rugged conditions. The devices are subjected to jarring, bumping and vibrations. Continual use under these conditions often results in the light beam being other than optimally aligned on the laser optics.

Centering the light beam on the laser optics is important where light converges from the focal lens through the nozzle onto a work piece to deliver large amounts of energy. A focal lens is often used to concentrate such light from the light source into a powerful beam to cut or weld various materials. The most intense part of the beam is the apex or focal spot. The apex or focal spot impinges upon a workpiece to perform much of the laser operation. It is therefore necessary to maintain an optimal portion of the incoming light beam upon the focal lens to thereby maximize the operation of the focal spot upon a workpiece.

Additionally, replacement of the light source is not uncommon. Once a new light source is installed, the light beam is typically aligned upon each mirror or lens in the optic system. Care must be taken not to significantly alter the optimal path length of light diverging from the light source to avoid diminishing the intensity of the concentrated laser beam. Care must also be exercised to direct the concentrated light beam through the nozzle of the laser head. Thus, the installation of a new light source is often time consuming, laborious, and requires considerable care.

Realignment of the optics in many present day laser heads mandates that the head be dismantled and each mirror or lens be individually adjusted. Laser cutting operations may not be performed in the cleanest environments. Thus, the laser head must be removed from the operation site to a clean location so that the laser optics can be adjusted in a contamination free environment. The realignment process, like the installation process, is also time-consuming, laborious and requires considerable care so as not to contaminate the optics with dirt and dust.

Some laser heads provide a way to realign the laser beam by adjusting the focal or condenser lens. In such laser heads, a mechanism for adjusting the condenser lens is disposed near or at the nozzle. A laser head having a mechanism for adjusting the condenser lens is disadvantageous for a number of reasons. One such reason is that the mechanism for adjusting the condenser lens results in a laser head having a bulky housing and nozzle. The bulky housing and nozzle is particularly disadvantageous where the laser head must be manipulated about the surface of a three-dimensional workpiece having varying topography.

Furthermore, assist or make-up gases, such as oxygen, are used with lasers to increase the laser's cutting efficiency and for removing debris from the cutting surface.

5 The assist gas is typically delivered from the nozzle of the laser head to the surface of a workpiece. The gas may be delivered to the nozzle via an external, loose tube or hose connected to a gas source. The gas delivery tubes of present day laser heads are deficient for a number of reasons including the fact that they create a point or place for a workpiece to catch upon. Additionally, these tubes frequently wear out or become damaged as a result of their external positioning next the laser head, thus requiring repeated replacement.

10 As is generally known to the skilled artisan, present day laser heads can be operated by a robot. The robot controls the pattern and distance the laser head operates about the surface of a workpiece.

15 The surface topography of a workpiece can vary considerably. Similarly, the thickness of a workpiece can also vary considerably. As a result, it has been a long-standing problem to have collisions between the laser head and a workpiece or a surrounding fixture that may damage either the laser head or the workpiece. To further complicate the problem, workpieces are often cut in batch during industrial operations. As a robot moves the laser head from workpiece to workpiece collisions may occur due to the misplacement of the workpiece within a support structure.

20 One attempt to overcome the problem of collisions has been to provide present day laser heads with breaker switches or micro switches that open to stop the robot after a laser head has collided with a workpiece. The force required to open the breaker switch may be a force sufficient to disconnect the laser head from the robot. This force can be sufficient to damage the laser head, optics or the robot.

25 Therefore, it is to be appreciated from the preceding that present day robotically operated laser heads are deficient in providing for precise manipulation about a three-dimensional workpiece having varying topography for a number of reasons. For example, present day laser heads require a bulky housing to accommodate present day optics and their support structures. Further, present day laser heads are typically fitted with an external assist gas delivery system that may catch upon a workpiece or fixture and may succumb to accelerated wear.

30 It is also to be appreciated from the preceding that present day robotically operated laser heads fail to provide a suitable means for adjusting the optical path of a

light source up through a condenser optic to focus a laser beam through a nozzle of the laser head.

It is also to be appreciated from the preceding that present day robotically operated laser heads fail to provide an effective, yet durable, way of delivering an assist gas to the nozzle of a laser head.

It is also to be appreciated from the preceding that present day, robotically operated laser devices having a laser head attached to a robot are deficient in providing an effective means of avoiding a collision with a workpiece so as not to substantially disconnect the laser head from the robot attached thereto.

10

### SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

As discussed hereinbelow, the present invention, to address the above stated problems and others, as is detailed hereinafter, enables an improved laser head for manipulation about a three-dimensional workpiece having varying topography. The present invention also provides an improved laser device having means for avoiding a collision with a workpiece by stopping the robot and laser head operation before damage to the laser head or robot occurs.

The laser head hereof has: a housing; a nozzle attached to the housing at a distal end thereof, the nozzle forming a tip, a light source which produces a light beam supported by the housing; at least one focal optic for receiving the light beam and focusing the light beam into a high density laser beam through the nozzle, means for adjusting the light path of the light beam from the light source within the housing onto the focal optic wherein the means for adjusting is adapted to center the focusing beam coaxial with the tip, and means for adjusting the means for receiving the light beam.

The laser head may further include means for delivering an assist gas from inside the housing, through the nozzle to the cutting surface of a workpiece. Also, the laser head may further comprise means for determining the proximity of the laser head to a workpiece.

By delivering an assist gas from within the housing and placing the means for adjusting the means for receiving the light beam within a top portion of the housing, the nozzle and the laser head may be formed with a more streamlined design. By making

the housing and nozzle more streamlined, the laser head can be operated more precisely about the surface of a three-dimensional workpiece.

The present invention also provides means for avoiding a collision between a laser head and a workpiece. Robotic operation of the laser head may be performed in several modes. The modes of operation may be determined by either the proximity of the laser head to a surface of a work piece or the operating condition of the robotic unit or both. The modes of operation may include, for example, an operation or run mode, a park mode, a teach mode, and a hold mode. The modes of operation may further be controlled by the operating condition of the laser head, for instance, whether the laser head is operating at an extended or a retracted limit.

In use the laser head is mounted to a robot or robotic arm, which together, function as a laser device that may operate upon a surface of a workpiece in one or more of the above mentioned modes. The laser device has means for determining if the laser head is in contact with or in close proximity to the surface of the workpiece. Depending upon the mode of operation that the laser device is functioning in, the device, particularly the robot operation, will cease to operate when the laser head is at a predetermined distance from a workpiece. Thus, by prohibiting the device from operating in certain modes when the laser head is positioned above a surface of a workpiece at a certain distance, the present invention provides a crash avoidance system whereby the laser head is less likely to be involved in a crash with a workpiece to prevent damage and other problems that may therefor follow.

The laser head hereof may be telescopic. In operation, the telescopic laser head retracts and extends to follow the surface of a workpiece and to correct for minor deviations therein. The crash avoidance system provides means for stopping the laser head and robot or the laser device when the telescopic laser head reaches an extended limit or a retracted limit.

The laser head will typically reach an extended limit when the laser head is fully telescoped and positioned at a maximum distance from a work piece such that the laser head can not extend further to accommodate the distance from a workpiece that the laser head is operating at. Even though the laser head is not likely to be involved in a collision with a work piece at this distance, such distance is likely to result in inferior

use of the laser. Therefore, the robot is better shut down, stopped then left to continued operation about a workpiece.

5 The laser head reaches a retracted limit when the laser head moves so close to a workpiece that the laser head may no longer retract within itself. The laser head may reach a retracted limit for a number of reasons, for example as a result of operating programming which does not coincide with the variations among surface topography between workpieces. If a laser head is left to operate at a retracted limit, the laser beam may not optimally impinge upon the surface of the workpiece. Additionally, the laser head will be more prone to crashing when operating at a retracted limit. Therefore, the robot and laser head are preferably stopped until adjustments, such as reprogramming the robot or repositioning the work piece, may be preformed.

10 For a more complete understanding of the present invention, reference is made to the following detailed description and accompanying drawings. In the drawings like reference characters refer to like parts throughout the several views.

15

#### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Fig. 1 is a cross-sectional side view of a first embodiment of a laser head in accordance herewith;

20 Fig. 2 is a cross-sectional top view of the laser head hereof taken along line 3-3 of Fig. 3 and line 1-1 of Fig. 1;

Fig. 3 is a second cross-sectional side view of the laser head in accordance with the present invention;

Fig. 4 is a cross-sectional view of a second embodiment of a laser head in accordance with the present invention; and

25 Fig. 5 is a flow chart of a preferred method of crash avoidance of a robotically operated laser head in accordance with the present invention.

#### DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

30 At the outset, it is to be noted that the present invention is particularly suited for use in solid material cutting or welding, such as in metal cutting, sheet metal cutting, welding, lap welding or for the car manufacturing industry in general, etc., although

other uses the [REDACTED] will become apparent to the skilled [REDACTED] from the ensuing disclosure.

Now referring to Figs. 1, 2 and 3, a laser head 10 in accordance with the present invention is depicted therein as including a housing 12 containing laser optics 13. The housing 12 forms a hollow inner chamber 20 to provide a light path and to protect the optics 13 from particulates and abrasion during any laser cutting or welding operation. The housing 12, at a first end thereof, is connected to a mounting block 14 by conventional means, such as fasteners or the like. The mounting block 14 may be formed separate from the housing 12 or made integral therewith. The mounting block 14 provides a suitable attachment member for securing various components or the laser head thereto. The housing 12 tapers down at a second end to a nozzle 16. Alternatively, the nozzle 16 may be attached to the second end using suitable fastening means. The nozzle 16 further tapers down to tip 90 having an exit or nozzle port 17 to provide a laser head that can direct assist gases and prevent debris or spatter from operation upon a workpiece from entering the nozzle 16.

In a preferred embodiment, the nozzle 16 is an extended tubular member that is narrower than the housing 12. Such a nozzle may have a first tapering conical portion followed by a second tapering portion, which also extends longitudinally to provide an extended member. The second tapering portion is then followed by a third conical tapering portion that terminates at a tip. The extended, narrower tubular nozzle provides a laser head capable of precisely operating about a three dimensional workpiece.

A light source 18 is connected to the mounting block 14 and is in optical communication with the hollow inner chamber 20 of the housing 12. The light source 18 provides a light beam for the laser head. The light source 18 can be any suitable laser light beam generating means, for example, an optical fiber or the like. The light source 18 is adapted to shine a beam of light through a chamber in the mounting block 14 and is adjustably connected thereto, as discussed below.

The light source 18 generates and directs the light beam upon the laser optics 13 or means for receiving the light beam. The means for receiving may be any type of receiving optic, including a lens, mirror, prism, beam splitter, etc. As shown, the means for receiving the light beam comprises a first or receiving lens 22 disposed

within the hollow inner chamber 20 of the housing 12. The receiving lens 22 may be a collimating lens. The receiving lens 22 provides means for delivering a suitable light beam to a second or focal lens 26. As shown, the receiving lens 22 is supported within the inner chamber 20 of the housing 12, at the end opposite the mounting block 14, by a first lens cartridge 24. The second lens 26 is supported inside the housing proximate a top portion of the nozzle 16 by a second lens cartridge 28. The second lens 26 is in optical communication with the first lens and may receive a collimated light beam from the first lens 22 to focus the light beam through the nozzle 16 onto a workpiece.

The laser head 10, hereof, further includes means for adjusting the incoming light beam upon a first receiving optic or the like, which is generally depicted at 33. As shown, the means 33 for adjusting the incoming light beam includes a fiber adapter 42 adjustably seated within the mounting block 14. The means 33 for adjusting the incoming light beam upon the first receiving optic provides for directing or centering the incoming light beam upon a desired light path. The desired light path is, for instance, an optical path in line with the focal or condensing lens 26. Thus, upon operation of the means 33 for adjusting, the incoming light beam can be directed upon the focal lens 26 in a manner suitable for delivering an amount of light to the focal lens 26 sufficient for forming a high-powered laser beam. The means 33 for adjusting also permits the focal point of a laser beam to be centered coaxial with the nozzle port 17 or hole without moving the focusing lens or the nozzle.

The means 33 for adjusting may comprise a fiber adapter 42. The fiber adapter provides means for adjustably supporting an optical fiber. As shown, the fiber adapter 42 is a hollow member having an outer wall 48 for supporting an optical fiber within the mounting block 14. The outer wall 48 is adapted to extend into the mounting block 14 and terminate at a tip 44 of the fiber adapter 42. The tip 44 has a central opening or is open at a first end for directing light from the optical fiber there through. A support ridge 46 extends circumferentially from the outer wall 48 to slidably support the fiber adapter 42 upon a ledge or shelf 32 of the mounting block 14. The outer wall 48 longitudinally extends beyond the support ridge 46 where the wall 48 has at least one notch 50 circumferentially disposed thereabout. The notch 50 is used to secure or fix the position of the fiber adapter 42 within the mounting block 14. The wall 48



terminates at a second open end 52. The second open end is adapted to receive an optical fiber there through.

An optic or optical fiber 34 is seated in the fiber adapter 42 and extends to approximately the tip 44 of the fiber adapter 42. The optical fiber 34 is secured or  
 5 removably fixed within the fiber adapter 42 using any suitable fastening means, for example, a screw 58 impinging upon a tapered portion 56. The use of the optical fiber 34 for producing a light beam is generally known and includes any type of long, thin thread of fused silica, or other transparent material used to transmit light.

The mounting block 14 provides a support for the fiber adapter 42 and a  
 10 mechanism to shear upon the occurrence of a violent or uncontrolled crash between the laser head and a workpiece or other fixture. The mounting block 14 has a first throughbore 91 and a second bore 93 concentric therewith, the bores 91, 93 cooperate to form a ledge 32. The fiber adapter 42 has a ridge 46 adapted to set upon the ledge 32 of the mounting block 14. The second bore 93 has a radius substantially greater than  
 15 both the ridge 46 of the fiber adapter and the first bore 91 of the mounting block 14. The fiber adapter 42 is disposed tip 44 first in the first throughbore 91 of the mounting block such that the ridge 46 of the fiber adapter contacts the ledge 32 of the mounting block and is translatable or is slidably seated thereon. Thus, the fiber adapter 42 is adapted to translate or slidably move upon the ledge 32. The slidability or translation  
 20 of the fiber adapter 42 provides for adjustment of the light beam upon the focal lens 26 to center the focused laser beam through the tip 90 of the nozzle 16.

The mounting block 14, may also provide a support to attach the laser head to a robot 35 (shown in part). The laser head may be attached to the robot 35 using any suitable fastening means, such as magnetic attachment, break-away tabs, etc. The  
 25 fastening means preferably provides a safety release mechanism, which disconnects the laser head from the robot upon a violent or uncontrolled collision.

As shown in Fig. 3, the mounting block is a two piece structure that acts as a safety relief mechanism adapted to shear upon the laser head uncontrollably colliding with another object to separate the laser head containing the optics from the robot 35.  
 30 The safety relief mechanism comprises an upper break-away flange 36 and a lower break away flange 40. The upper break-away flange 36 is secured to the robot 35 using suitable fastening means, such as screws, bolts or the like. The lower break-away

flange 40 is secured to the mounting block 14 using suitable fastening means, such as a screw 60, bolt or the like. The lower break-away flange is secured to the upper break-away flange by a suitable break-away means. The break-away means is effected by at least one break-away plate 62 and a plurality of pins 98, 99 connecting the upper break-away flange 36 to the lower break-away flange 40. A break-away ring 38 is disposed between the upper and lower break-away flanges to provide means for aligning the flanges. The break-away ring 38 conforms to the inner shape of the upper and lower flanges and rests upon the lower flange to effectuate the alignment.

The break-away plate 62 may be formed of any material that provides a suitable shearing mechanism to disconnect the upper flange 36 from the lower flange in the event of an uncontrolled collision between the laser head and a workpiece or other object to thereby separate the laser head from the robot 35. Such a mechanism protects the robot and the laser head from major damage should a collision be unavoidable.

The lower break-away flange 40 has a bore with a radius substantially wider than the outer wall 48 of the fiber adapter 42 to allow for unrestricted movement of the fiber adapter 42. As discussed below, movement of the fiber adapter 42 may be restricted by one or more fasteners.

Referring now to Fig. 2, the fiber adapter 42 is adjustably attached to the mounting block 14 with a plurality of fasteners 66, 66', 66'', 66'''. Preferably the fiber adapter 42 is adjustably mounted within the mounting block with at least three fasteners, and preferably four fasteners, diametrically disposed radially about the lower break-away flange and contacting the notch 50 of the fiber adapter 42. As shown in Fig. 1, a screw 66 mounted through the lower break-away flange 40 contacts the notch 50 in the outer wall 48. The screw 66 cooperates with at least one other screw to restrict the slidable movement of the fiber adapter 42 about a horizontal or a x-y axis.

The plurality of fasteners 66, 66', 66'', 66''' are equally distanced around the fiber adapter 42. Adjustment of the light beam is accomplished by loosening specific fasteners 66, 66', 66'', 66''' followed by the tightening of other fasteners 66, 66', 66'', 66''' whereby the optic fiber or the fiber adapter 42 may be incrementally moved. This movement of the optic fiber, in turn moves the light beam emitted from the light source to incrementally alter the light path of the beam along the x-y axis of the laser head.

When the correct position of the light beam is reached, fasteners 66, 66', 66'', 66''' are re-tightened.

In use, the laser head travels along a surface of a workpiece at a predetermined speed. As the present invention contemplates, the laser head is adapted to operate upon a three dimensional surface having varying topography. Such a laser head is adapted to continuously alter the position or distance that the tip 90 or nozzle 16 of the laser head operates at in relation to the changing surface topography of the workpiece.

A laser head adapted to continuously alter the operating height is now described in a preferred embodiment. The housing 12 in this preferred embodiment is a telescopic two-part assembly comprising a first body or upper eye-induced tube 70 and a second body or lower tube 72 retractable and extendable into and out of the first body 70.

The telescopic housing 70, 72 provides a laser head that may precisely track the surface of a workpiece in relation to the changing topography of said surface. The telescopic housing also provides an improved or faster means for adjusting the distance or height that the laser head operates at above a workpiece as compared to a laser head adjusted solely by a robot or robotic arm.

The first and second bodies 70, 72 may be formed of any suitable material, including stainless steel, brass, alloys, ceramics, etc. Suitable materials are resistant to wear and heat and provide adequate support for the optics. The bodies 70, 72 are preferably rigid, cylindrical structures that are sized to fit one within the other. The telescopic housing thereby provides a housing less prone to wear, as opposed to for example, an accordion or a flexible housing design.

The laser head, as shown in Fig. 3, includes means 21 for continuously adjusting the distance or height that the nozzle or laser head operates at above the surface of a workpiece. The means 21 for continuously adjusting is any suitable device for extending and contracting the housing within itself or the mounting block. Such means may include one or more of the following, for example, an electric motor, rack and pinion, hydraulic means, pulley and cable, opposing springs, etc.

As shown, the means 21 for adjusting includes a motor 76, a flange 75, a pulley 74, a cable 80, and at least one spring 82 that are connected to drive the telescopic housing. As stated above, the lower tube or second body 72 has an outer diameter

smaller than the upper tube or first body 70 and is telescoped therein. The flange 75 is connected to or made integral with the top of the lower tube 72. The pulley 74 having a cable 80 associated with it is rotatably mounted within the mounting block 14. The cable 80 is wound upon the pulley 74 with one end extending through the mounting block 14 and connected to the flange 75. The motor 76 is mounted to the mounting block and is functionally connected to the pulley 74. The motor 76 is controlled electronically through a controller (not shown). The motor 76 provides rotational motion to the pulley 74 for winding and unwinding the cable 80 about the pulley 74. The cable 80 in turn moves the flange 75 and the corresponding lower tube 72 into the upper tube 70.

As shown in Fig. 1, a spring 82 is seated between the upper tube 70 and the lower tube 72 and acts to oppose the retraction of the lower tube 72 within the upper tube 70, thereby opposing the motion of the pulley 74. As shown, the spring 82 is supported at one end by the lower tube 72 with a spring shield 84. The opposite end of the spring 82 is attached to the mounting block 14 at a spring post 86. Operation of the pulley 74 to wind the cable 80 retracts the lower tube 72 within the upper tube 70. Likewise but in a reverse manner, operation of the pulley 74 to unwind the cable 80 extends the lower tube 72 from the upper tube 70.

The laser head may further include means for determining the distance the laser head is positioned at above a surface of a workpiece. The means for determining may be any suitable distance sensing device or means, including but not limited to various electrical devices, capacitive sensing, laser reflection, variable resistance sensors, a linear potentiometer, etc. As shown, the means for determining is means 97 for capacitive sensing. The means 97 for capacitive sensing includes an electrically conductive tip 90 disposed at the free or distal end of the nozzle 16 and a capacitive sensing cable 94 (shown in part) attached thereto.

As shown, the nozzle 16 is connected to the bottom of the lower tube 72 of the housing. The nozzle preferably has an electrically conductive tip 90. The nozzle 16 may be made of any metal or alloy that is conductive and heat resistant. An insulating insert 89 is disposed between the tip 90 and the rest of the nozzle or housing. The insert prohibits undesirable electric current from traveling through the nozzle or tip to the housing. The tip 90 is connected to the nozzle 16 with a conductive threaded insert

87. The insert 90 provides a connection from the tip 90 to the capacitive sensing cable 94.

Thus, the tip 90 is in electrical communication with a capacitive sensing cable 94. The capacitive sensing cable 94 has an inner conductive core 104. The inner  
5 conductive core 104 is surrounded by an insulated outer coating or dielectric 110. The capacitive sensing cable may be connected to the tip 90 in any suitable manner, such as spot welding, fasteners, etc. The inner conductive core 104 is a conductive metal, such as copper, silver, etc. A second insert 92 may be used to separate the tip 90 from the nozzle 16. As with the first insert above, the second insert 92 prohibits undesirable  
10 electric current from traveling through the nozzle to the housing.

In use, an electric charge is applied to the insulative tip 90 through the capacitive sensing cable 94, whereby an electrical discharge to the workpiece in relation to the distance from the tip 90 occurs. The electrical discharge is measured or monitored by a controller or any other suitable device (not shown), such as a PLC,  
15 computer analogue to digital converter, analogue electrical circuit, etc. The controller may also operate to keep the distance between the tip 90 and the workpiece constant, such as by controlling the motor 76 operation. As will be discussed below, the controller may also be used as part of a crash avoidance system.

Operation of the motor 76 is controlled by a controller (not shown), such as a  
20 PLC, electric circuit, computer or the like which may have a program. The controller determines the motor 76 operation by processing signals sent from a potentiometer 102, means 97 for capacitive sensing or the like. As shown the potentiometer 102 is disposed between the mounting block 14 and the lower tube 72. The potentiometer 102 is electronically connected to the controller. The potentiometer 102 senses the amount  
25 of compression / retraction the housing has undergone and sends an electronic signal to the controller. The signals may then be processed with any suitable device, for example, an A/D converter, computer software loaded into the computer, etc. The signals are then used to determine the extension/retraction the housing has undergone.

The laser head may also include an assist gas delivery system, wherein the  
30 system, preferably, is disposed within the housing and adapted to deliver an assist gas to the nozzle 16. As shown, the assist gas delivery system is a telescopable, two-part conduit 96 which extends along the inside of the housing 12 through the mounting

block 14 and is connected to a gas inlet connector 30. The gas inlet connector 30 is mounted to the top of the mounting block 14 and extends into the housing 12. The gas inlet connector 30 is connected to the conduit 96 disposed within the housing 12 by any suitable fastening means. The conduit 96 runs the length of the housing 12 tapering at the nozzle 16. The conduit 96 has a rigid inner tube 98 collapsible into a rigid outer tube 100, wherein the outer tube 100 has an inner diameter greater than that of the outer diameter of the inner tube 98, thereby allowing the conduit 96 to retract/extend within itself. The retractable, extendable gas assist delivery system provides a durable way to deliver an assist gas to the nozzle and provides a laser head more capable of operating about a three dimensional surface.

In a preferred embodiment, the laser head and robot form a laser unit having a crash avoidance system. The crash avoidance system includes means for determining the operating mode of the laser head; means for determining the distance the laser head is operating at above a surface of a workpiece; and means for stopping the operation of the laser unit to avoid a collision when the laser head is detected at a predetermined distance above a surface of a workpiece.

Referring now to Fig. 5, shown therein is a flow chart depicting the operation of a crash avoidance system in accordance with the present invention generally shown at 524. Operation of the laser head and robot is performed as a unit. The unit may be operated in several different modes. The modes of operation may be determined by either the position of the laser head about a workpiece or by an operating condition of the robot or by both. The modes of operation may include, for example, an operating or run mode, a park mode 510, a teach mode 512, and a hold mode 514.

Each mode of operation may be a discrete operating mode. The run mode is the actual operation of the unit. The park mode 510 is a mode of operation where the unit is in a standing or latent position. The teach mode 512 is a mode of operation where the unit masks or traces the desired motions and actions of operation in order to program the unit. The hold mode 514 is a mode of operation where the unit operates upon a portion of a workpiece at an edge or hole of the workpiece. During operation, the laser head normally tracks the surface of a workpiece by rising and falling therewith. Rather than having the height of the laser head drop dramatically upon reaching an edge or hole in the workpiece, in the hold mode 514 the laser head

maintains it's operating axis or height irrespective of the surface it is operating upon to properly perform the laser operation.

The means 522 for determining the distance the laser head is operating at above a surface of a workpiece is any device or means that allows the approximate space  
5 between the distal end of the tip of a laser head and a surface of a workpiece to be measured. The laser head and robot function as a unit which operates upon a surface of a work piece in one or more of the above mentioned modes. The means 522 for determining the distance may be any suitable means or device, such as the means 97 for  
10 for determining may also be either a single device or separate devices 522', 522'' for determining the distance.

As mentioned above and shown in Fig. 3, the means 97 for capacitive sensing comprises a nozzle or tip 90 and means for electrically determining if the laser head is in contact with or in close proximity to the surface of the workpiece. Depending upon  
15 the mode of operation that the unit is functioning in, the unit will not operate or will cease to operate when the laser head is at a predetermined distance from a work piece. The predetermined distance is normally from 0 mm to about 1mm and preferably less than 0.5 mm between the laser head and a workpiece. A crash is considered avoided even if the predetermined distance is set to 0 mm as long as damage does not occur to  
20 the laser head or robotic unit upon contact. Thus, by prohibiting the unit from operating in certain modes when the laser head is positioned at certain heights or in contact with a workpiece, the present invention provides a laser head less likely to be involved in a crash with a workpiece or damaged, thereby preventing problems that may therefor follow.

25 The laser head and robot or the unit may further be controlled by the operating condition of the laser head. For instance, operating conditions of the laser head include but are not limited to the laser head reaching an extended limit 516 or a retracted limit 518. As the present invention also provides a laser head that is telescopic or extendable, the crash avoidance system may provide means for stopping the unit when  
30 the laser head reaches the extended limit 516 or the retracted limit 518. A laser head will typically reach an extended limit 516 when the laser head is at a maximum distance from a workpiece and the telescoping housing is fully extended. Even though

the laser head is likely to be involved in a collision with a workpiece, such operating condition is likely to result in inferior use of the laser beam. Therefore, the laser unit is better shut down or left idle for adjustment than left to continued operation on a workpiece.

5       The laser head reaches a retracted limit 518 when the laser head operates or moves close to or is in such proximity to a workpiece that the telescopable housing of the laser head may no longer retract within itself. A laser head may reach a retracted limit 518 as a result of preprogramming the operation of the laser head, wherein the programming does not coincide with unexpected variations of workpiece surface  
10       topography. If a laser head is left to operate at a retracted limit 518, the focused laser beam may not properly impinge upon the surface of the workpiece, or the laser head may be prone to increased collisions. Therefore, the unit is preferably stopped or left idle until adjustment to the unit or reprogramming may be preformed.

For example, as a laser cuts a workpiece, the laser head may operate at about 1  
15       mm from the cutting surface. In movement from workpiece to workpiece, the laser cutting head may momentarily reach a parked position, being as much as 10 mm from the workpiece. As the head then moves from workpiece to workpiece, the means 522 for avoiding a collision detects if the workpiece comes within a 3 mm to 6 mm range of the surface of a work piece and shuts the laser head and robot off before a collision  
20       occurs.

The means 520 for stopping the operation of the laser head to avoid a collision when the laser head is detected at a predetermined distance above a surface of a workpiece may be any suitable means or device that stops or prohibits the movement of the laser head and robotic unit when a "crash" condition is met. Suitable devices  
25       comprise for example, a controller that receives a signal from a linear potentiometer, the controller in turn sending a signal to open a crash interlock to stop the laser head and the robot. The controller can be any suitable controlling device that may receive a signal and send a signal when a "crash" condition is met. Suitable controlling devices include a PLC, a computer driven by software, a circuit board with a controller chip, an  
30       electric circuit, an analogue electric circuit, PROM, etc.

Referring now to Fig. 4, there is depicted therein a second embodiment of the present invention, generally depicted at 200, wherein an optical fiber 224 is connected



to a laser head at an angle, preferably normal to the exiting axis. In this embodiment, the laser head comprises a housing 201, an optical fiber 224 and means 215 for adjusting the light path of light beam produced from a light source. As shown, the means 215 for adjusting is an adjustable optic or mirror assembly disposed within the housing 201 for adjusting the incoming light beam along the y-axis of the laser head and a translatable or slidable carriage to adjust the incoming light beam along the x-axis of the laser head.

Positioning the optical fiber 224 at an angle provides for attachment of a camera 202 or other viewing device at the top of a mounting block 204, directly above the focused laser beam. As shown, a receiving mirror 206 or optic is disposed within the housing 201 and is adapted to deflect or bend the incoming light beam onto a first lens 208 to provide a light beam that enters the housing at an angle in relation to the exiting laser beam. The light beam is passed to a second or focal lens 210 from which the light beam is focused through a nozzle 212 onto a workpiece (not shown).

A mounting block 204 in conjunction with the housing 201 is used to fix the laser head to a robot or robotic arm 235 (shown in Part). As shown, the mounting block 204 also provides a suitable support for a light source 224, for optics 208, 206, 210 and for a camera 202. The mounting block 204 has an internal chamber 218; a first hole 220 passing through the bottom of the mounting block which bisects the chamber 218; and a second hole 222 extending from the side of the chamber to a back wall.

The means 215 for adjusting may include an adjustable mirror assembly. As shown, the adjustable mirror assembly is disposed within the mounting block 204. The adjustable mirror assembly includes a mirror 206, a mirror mount 214, and a pair of biased adjustment fasteners 250 (one of which is shown). The mirror 206 is seated on the mirror mount 214 and is rotatably disposed within the internal chamber 218 with the pair of biased adjustment fasteners 250. The fasteners 250 may be any suitable securing members that are adjustable, such as screws, bolts, clips, clamps, etc. As shown, the fasteners 250 are screws extending through the mounting block to adjustably hold the mirror mount 214 in place.

The mirror mount 214 has a machined side to tightly fit against or butt the front surface of a fiber adapter 230. A spring 216 is compressed between the mirror mount 214 and the back of the chamber 218 to keep the mirror mount 214 butted to or pressed

against the fiber adapter 230. Butting the mirror mount to the fiber adapter 230 provides an assembly that may translate or slide in unison, yet forms a two piece assembly or a carriage 231 wherein the mirror mount 214 or mirror may independently rotate about an axis.

5 An optical fiber 224 or other light source is connected to the mounting block by a fiber adapter 230. The optical fiber 224 is attached to the fiber adapter 230 by any suitable means, for example and as shown, a butt plate 228. The optical fiber 224 is positioned to shine a light beam through the second hole 222 to a receiving optic or mirror 206. The mirror 206 is positioned on the mirror mount 214 to form the mirror  
10 assembly. The mirror 206 may be of such design as to reflect only desired wavelengths. The mirror 206 is positioned at an angle, preferably about 45 degrees, to provide optical communication between the optical fiber 224 and a first lens 208.

A pair of fasteners, such as adjustment screws 250 (one of which is shown), rotatably support the mirror mount 214 within the mounting block. The adjustment  
15 screws 250 extend from the outside of the mounting block 204 to the mirror mount 214. The adjustment screws 250 function to adjust the light beam from the optical fiber 224 along the y-axis of the laser head onto the first lens 208 without changing the length the light beam travels from the optic fiber 224 to the first lens 208.

The carriage 231, as shown, comprises the mirror assembly and the fiber  
20 adapter 230, wherein the mirror assembly diametrically opposes the fiber adapter at machined surfaces to form the carriage 231. The carriage 231 is slidably seated in the mounting block 204. A guide pin 232 fixed to the mounting block rides within a guide channel 234 formed in the carriage 231 to prohibit rotational movement of the fiber adapter 230 within the mounting block 204.

25 The carriage 231 is translatable along an axis of the laser head. Translation of the carriage 231 is limited by any suitable means or fastening device. As shown, a pair of set screws 244, 246 limit the translation of the carriage. The set screws 244, 246 extend through the mounting block 204 to contact a second groove 248 formed on the slidable carriage 231, whereby tightening the set screws fixes the position of the  
30 slidable carriage 231.

The set screws 244, 246 operate in a synergist manner to incrementally move the carriage 231 along an axis of the laser head. To incrementally move the carriage,

the set screws 244, 246 are seated in a groove of the mounting block wherein the groove 248 terminates on either end at an inclining wall. The screws 244, 246 and groove 248 are adapted to move the carriage along the x-axis when loosening one screw 244 followed by the tightening of the other 246. Moving the carriage along the x-axis thereby moves the optic fiber and mirror mount in unison to reposition the light beam on a lens 208 without changing the length of the light path between the optic fiber 224 and the lens 208.

In practicing the present invention, preferably, the housing 201 is sealed and generally kept under positive pressure to keep the internal components of the housing 201, including optics, dust free. Also, the optical system, preferably, comprises a plurality of lenses such that a first receiving lens 208 or optic directs a parallel or collimated light beam to a second focusing lens 210.

While the invention has been illustrated in detail in the drawings and the foregoing description, the same is to be considered as illustrative and not restrictive in character, it is understood that only the preferred embodiment has been shown and described fully and that all changes and modifications that come within the spirit of the invention are desired to be protected.

Having thus described the above several embodiments of the present invention, what is claimed is:

## CLAIMS

1  
2  
3  
4       1.     In a laser device of the type having a laser head and a robot, the laser  
5 head being mounted to the robot, the laser head having a housing, a focal lens disposed  
6 within the housing, and a light source in optical communication with the focal lens,  
7 wherein the improvement comprises:

- 8       (a) means for determining the operating mode of the laser device;  
9       (b) means for determining the distance the laser head is operating at above a  
10 surface of a workpiece; and  
11       (c) means for stopping the operation of the laser device to avoid damage to the  
12 laser device when the laser head is detected at a predetermined distance  
13 above a surface of a workpiece.  
14

15       2.     The laser device of Claim 1 wherein the means for stopping is adapted  
16 to stop the laser device when the laser head is positioned between 0 mm to about 1mm  
17 above a surface of a workpiece.  
18

19       3.     The laser device of Claim 2 wherein the operating mode of the laser  
20 device is selected from the group consisting of parked, teach, run, hold, extended limit,  
21 or retracted limit.  
22

23       4.     The laser device of Claim 3 wherein the means for stopping is adapted  
24 to stop the laser device when the laser head is positioned between 3 mm to about 6 mm  
25 above the surface of the workpiece when the operating mode of the laser device is the  
26 parked mode.  
27

28       5.     The laser device of Claim 2 wherein the means for determining the  
29 distance the laser head is operating above a surface of a workpiece further comprises  
30 means for capacitive sensing.  
31

1           6.     Laser device of the type having a laser head and a robot, the laser  
2 head being mounted to the robot, the laser head having a housing, a focal lens disposed  
3 within the housing, and a light source in optical communication with the focal lens,  
4 wherein the improvement comprises:

5           (a) the housing being a telescopable housing having a first body portion and a  
6 second body portion, the first body portion being telescopable with the second body  
7 portion;

8           (b) means for determining the operating mode of the laser device;

9           (c) means for detecting the distance the laser head is operating at above a  
10 surface of a workpiece; and

11           (d) means for stopping the operation of the laser device to avoid damage to the  
12 laser device when the laser head is detected at a predetermined distance above a surface  
13 of a workpiece.

14

15           7.     The laser device of claim 6 wherein the laser device further comprises:

16           means for determining if the telescopable housing is at an extended limit;

17           means for stopping the operation of the laser device if the telescopable housing  
18 is at an extended limit;

19           means for determining if the telescopable housing is at a retracted limit; and

20           means for stopping the operation of the laser device if the telescopable housing  
21 is at a retracted limit.

22

23           8.     The laser device of Claim 7 wherein the means for stopping is adapted  
24 to stop the laser device when the laser head is positioned between 0 mm to about 1mm  
25 above a surface of a workpiece.

26

27           9.     The laser device of Claim 8 wherein the operating mode of the laser  
28 head is selected from the group consisting of parked, teach, run, or hold.

29

30           10.    The laser device of Claim 7 wherein the means for determining the  
31 distance the laser head is operating above a surface of a workpiece further comprises  
32 means for capacitive sensing.

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32

11. In a laser device of the type having a laser head and a robot, the laser head being mounted to the robot, the laser head having a housing, a focal lens disposed within the housing, and a light source in optical communication with the focal lens, wherein the improvement comprises:

- (a) means for determining the operating mode of the laser device;
  - (b) means for determining the distance the laser head is operating above a surface of a workpiece;
  - (c) means for prohibiting the operation of the laser device to avoid damage to the laser device when the laser head is detected at a predetermined distance above a surface of a workpiece;
  - (d) the housing being a telescopable housing;
  - (e) means for stopping the operation of the laser device if the telescopable housing is at an extended or retracted limit; and
- wherein the means for stopping the operation of the laser device comprises a crash interlock.

12. The laser head of Claim 11 wherein the predetermined distance is from about 0 mm to about 1mm above the surface of the workpiece.

13. The laser head of Claim 11 wherein the operating mode of the laser device is selected from the operating group consisting of parked, teach, run, or hold.

14. The laser device of Claim 11 wherein the means for determining the distance the laser head is operating above a surface of a workpiece comprises means for capacitive sensing.

15. The laser device of Claim 11 wherein the means for determining the operating mode comprises a PLC.

16. The laser device of Claim 11 wherein the means for determining the operating mode comprises a computer having a computer program.

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30

17. The laser device of Claim 11 wherein the means for determining the operating mode of the laser head, and the means for determining the distance, and the means for prohibiting the operation of the laser head, and the means for stopping the operation of the laser device comprises an electronic circuit.

18. In a laser head of the type adapted to be mounted to a robot, the laser head having a housing, the housing having a nozzle with a tip, a focal lens in the housing and a light source in optical communication with the focal lens, the focal lens adapted to focus a light beam from the light source into a focused laser beam having a focal point, wherein the improvement comprises:

means for adjusting the light path of a light beam from the light source within the housing onto a focal optic wherein the means for adjusting is adapted to center the focused laser beam coaxial with the tip.

19. A laser head, the laser head being mountable to a robotic unit, the laser head having a housing, a focal lens in the housing and a light source in optical communication with the focal lens, the housing having a nozzle with a tip wherein the improvement comprises:

a device for adjusting a light path of a light beam directed from the light source onto a focal optic to center a focused laser beam formed by the focal optic coaxial with the tip, wherein the device is translatably supported by the housing.

20. The laser head of Claim 19 wherein the device for adjusting the light path within the housing comprises a receiving optic for receiving the light beam, the receiving optic being translatably supported within the housing to adjust the light path of the light beam along a first axis of the housing to center the focused laser beam coaxial with the tip.

1           21.     The laser head of Claim 20 wherein the receiving optic is pivotally  
2 supported within the housing to adjust the light path of the light beam along a second  
3 axis of the housing.

4  
5           22.     The laser head of Claim 19 wherein the receiving optic is translatable  
6 along a first axis and pivotal along a second axis to adjust the light path of the light  
7 beam onto the focal lens to center the focused laser beam coaxial with the tip.

8  
9           23.     The laser head of Claim 19 wherein the light source comprises an optical  
10 fiber, and the device for adjusting the light source comprises a fiber adapter, the fiber  
11 adapter adapted to support the optical fiber and direct a beam of light from the optical  
12 fiber into the housing, the fiber adapter being translatable about the housing to adjust a  
13 path of the light beam onto a receiving optic supported within the housing to center the  
14 focused laser beam coaxial with the tip.

15  
16           24.     The laser head of Claim 20 wherein the light source is an optical fiber  
17 supported by a fiber adapter, the optical fiber being adapted to direct a light beam into  
18 the housing to the receiving optic, the optical fiber being separated from the receiving  
19 optic by a distance, the fiber adapter being translatable with the receiving optic to  
20 maintain a constant distance between the optical fiber and the receiving optic.

21  
22           25. A laser head, the laser head being mountable to a robotic unit, the laser head  
23 having a housing, a focal lens in the housing and a light source in optical  
24 communication with the focal lens wherein the improvement comprises:  
25           the housing being a telescopable housing; and  
26           a telescopable assist gas delivery tube, wherein the assist gas delivery tube is  
27 disposed within the telescopable housing.

28  
29           26.     The laser head of Claim 25 wherein the laser head further comprises a  
30 nozzle attached to the housing, the nozzle having a first tapering portion, a second  
31 elongated tapering portion and a third tapering portion.

32



1           27.     Laser head of the type being adapted to a robotic, the laser  
2 head having a housing, a focal lens in the housing and a light source in optical  
3 communication with the focal lens, wherein the improvement comprises:

4                 means for adjusting a light path within the housing of a light beam from the  
5 light source, wherein the housing is a telescopable housing.

6  
7           28.     The laser head of Claim 27 further comprising an assist gas delivery  
8 tube disposed within the telescopable housing, wherein the assist gas delivery tube is  
9 telescopable.

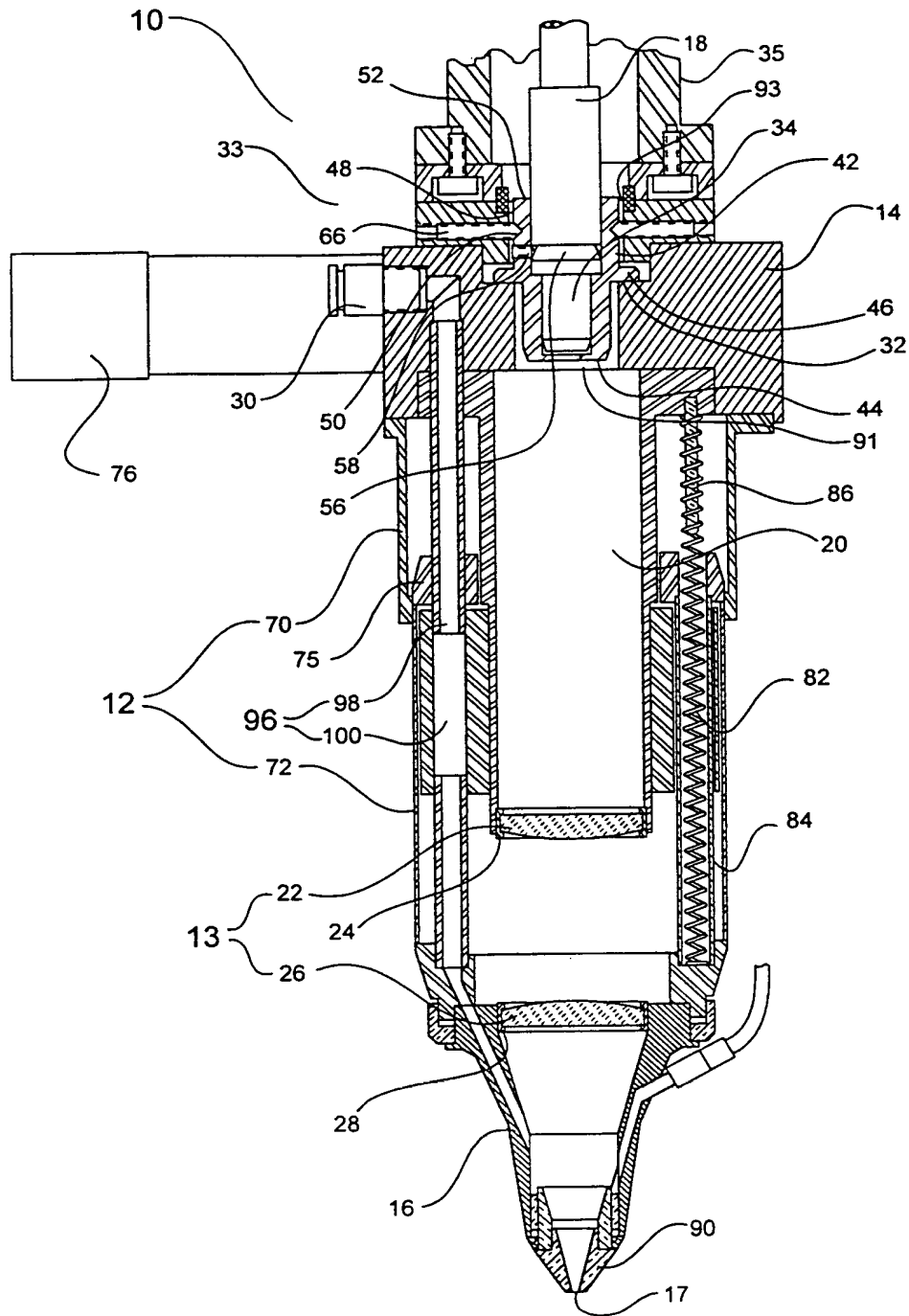
10  
11           29.     The laser head of Claim 28 further comprising an elongated nozzle  
12 attached to the housing.

13  
14           30.     The laser head of Claim 28 wherein the means for adjusting further  
15 comprises a receiving optic, the receiving optic being translatably supported within the  
16 housing to adjust a light path of a light beam along a first axis of the housing and  
17 pivotally supported to adjust the light path of the light beam along a second axis of the  
18 housing onto the focal lens.

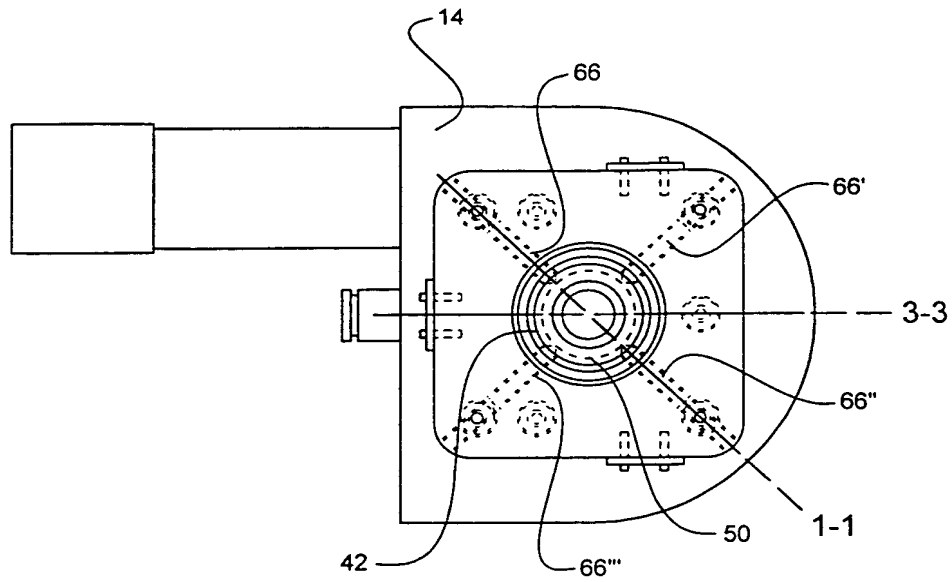
19

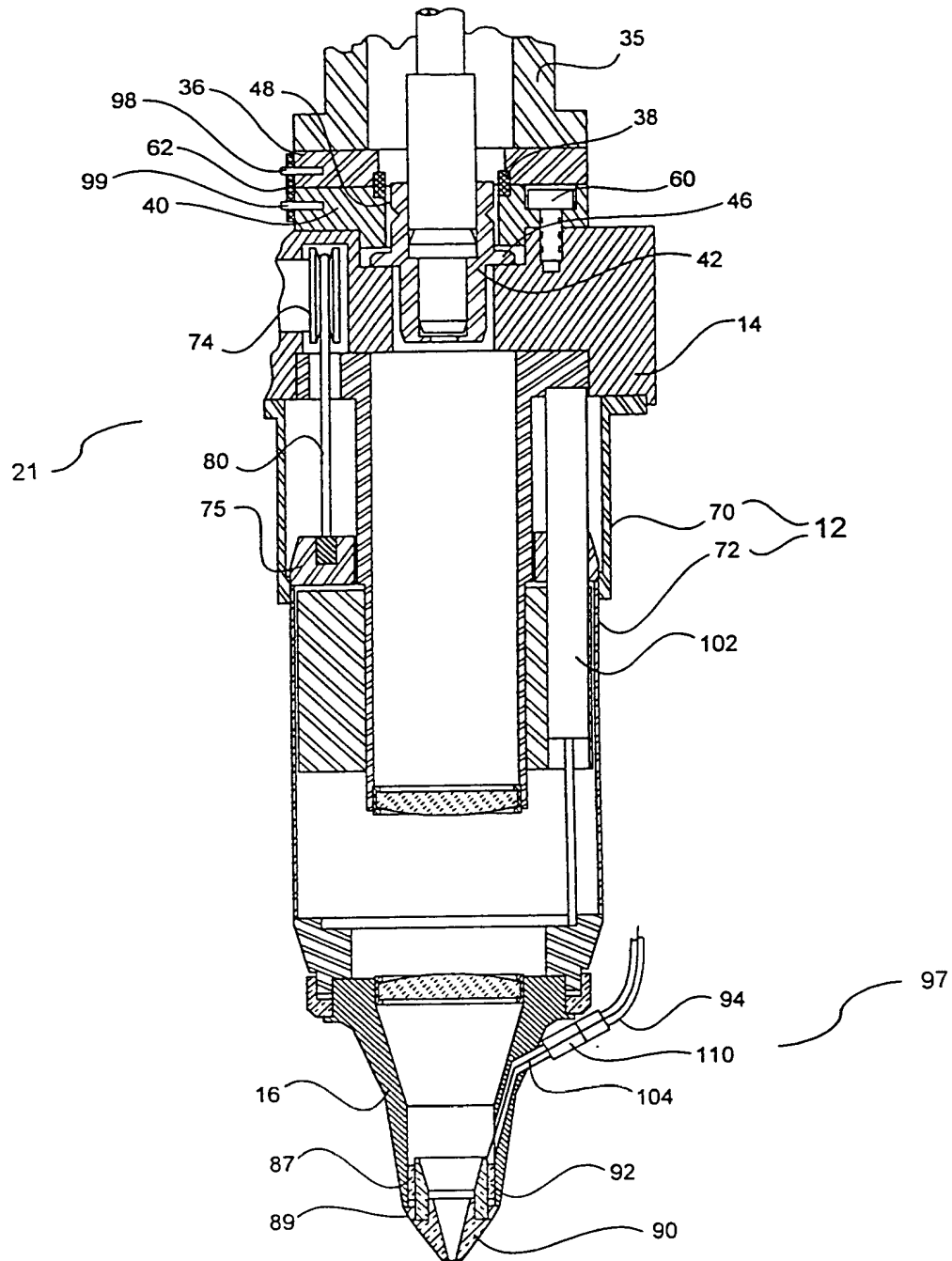
# ABSTRACT

A laser cutting or welding device, the device having a laser head (10) and a robot (35), wherein the laser head is attached to the robot (35). The laser head (10) has a housing (12), a focal lens (26) disposed within the housing and a light source (18) in optical communication with the focal lens (26). The housing (12) has a nozzle with a tip (90), the tip having an exit port (17). The laser head (10) has means (33) for adjusting a light path of a light beam directed from the light source onto a focal optic to center a focusing beam formed by the focal optic coaxial with the tip. In one aspect hereof, the laser device has a crash avoidance system.



*Fig. 1*

*Fig. 2*



*Fig. 3*

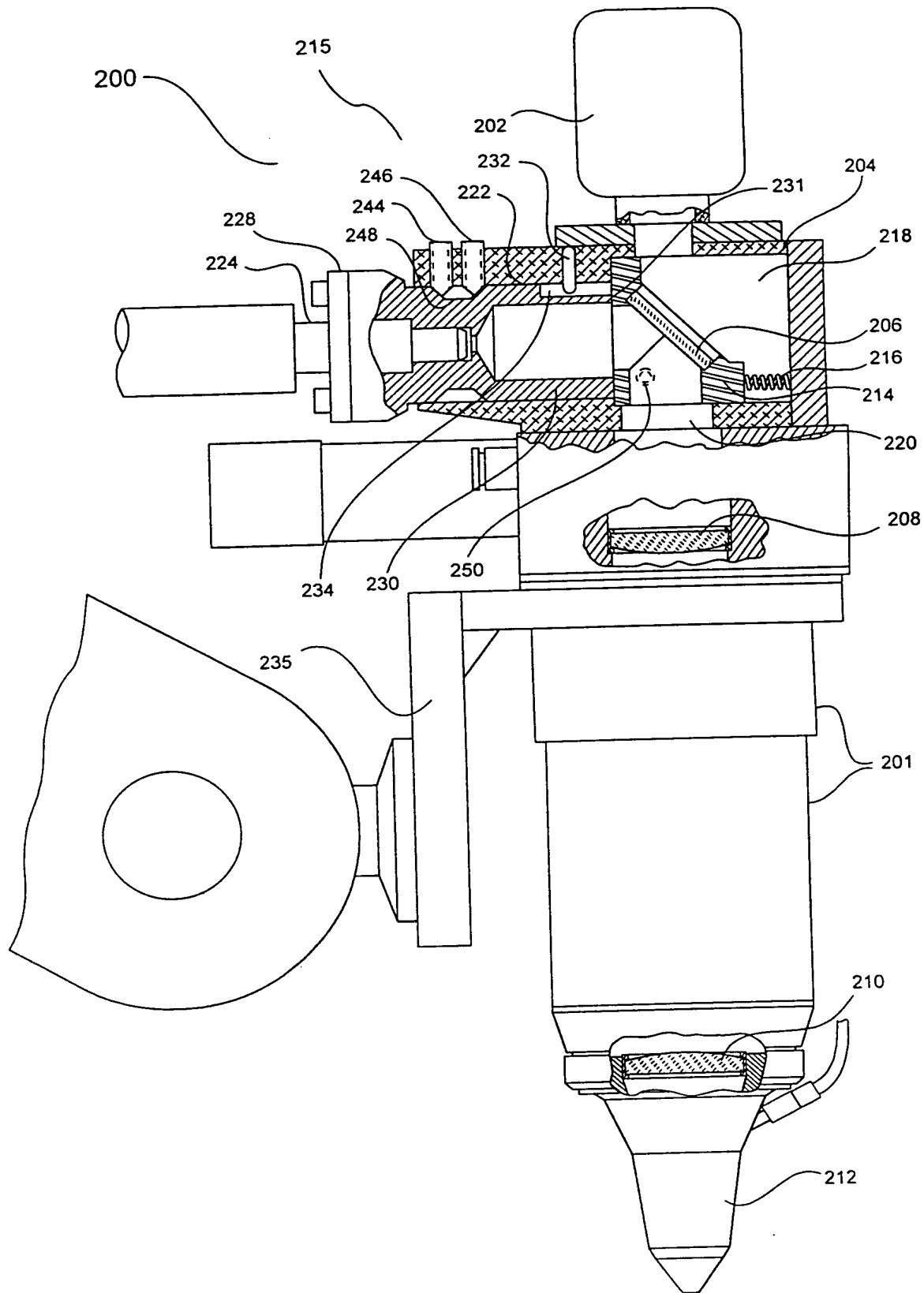


Fig. 4

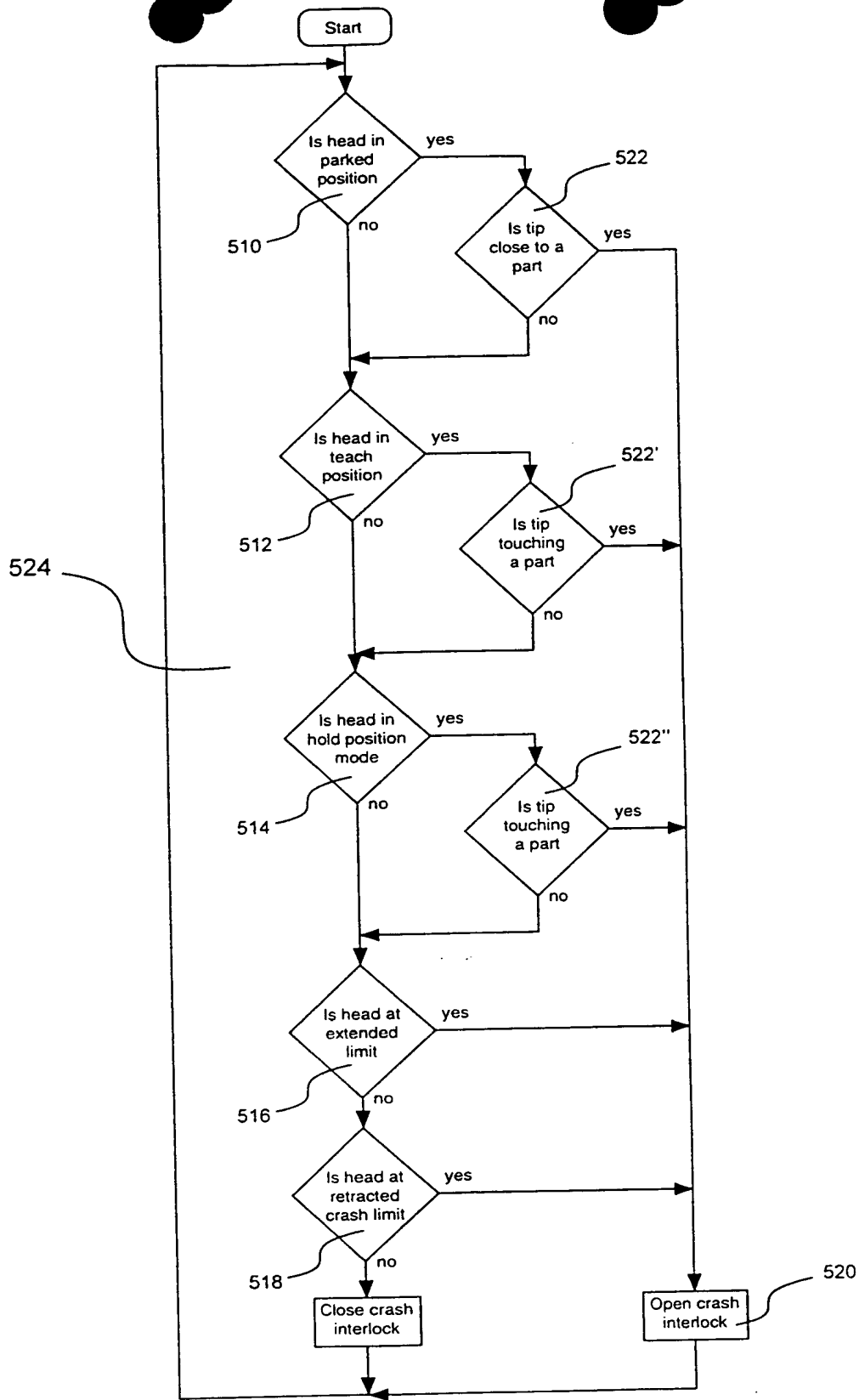


Fig. 5

## PATENT COOPERATION TREATY

PCT

## INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

(PCT Article 18 and Rules 43 and 44)

REC'D 28 DEC 1999

Applicant's or agent's file reference LUM-100-A-PC	FOR FURTHER ACTION	see Notification of Transmittal of International Search Report (Form PCT/ISA/220) as well as, where applicable, item 5 below.
International application No. PCT/US99/20820	International filing date (day/month/year) 09 SEPTEMBER 1999	(Earliest) Priority Date (day/month/year) 09 SEPTEMBER 1998
Applicant GSI LUMONICS		

This international search report has been prepared by this International Searching Authority and is transmitted to the applicant according to Article 18. A copy is being transmitted to the International Bureau.

This international search report consists of a total of 3 sheets.

☒ It is also accompanied by a copy of each prior art document cited in this report.

1. ☐ Certain claims were found unsearchable (See Box I).
2. ☐ Unity of invention is lacking (See Box II).
3. ☐ The international application contains disclosure of a nucleotide and/or amino acid sequence listing and the international search was carried out on the basis of the sequence listing
  - ☐ filed with the international application.
  - ☐ furnished by the applicant separately from the international application,
    - ☐ but not accompanied by a statement to the effect that it did not include matter going beyond the disclosure in the international application as filed.
  - ☐ transcribed by this Authority.
4. With regard to the title, ☒ the text is approved as submitted by the applicant.
  - ☐ the text has been established by this Authority to read as follows:
5. With regard to the abstract,
  - ☒ the text is approved as submitted by the applicant.
  - ☐ the text has been established, according to Rule 38.2(b), by this Authority as it appears in Box III. The applicant may, within one month from the date of mailing of this international search report, submit comments to this Authority.
6. The figure of the drawings to be published with the abstract is:
  - Figure No. 1 ☒ as suggested by the applicant. ☐ None of the figures.
  - ☐ because the applicant failed to suggest a figure.
  - ☐ because this figure better characterizes the invention.



## INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/US99/20820

## A. CLASSIFICATION AND SUBJECT MATTER

IPC(6) : B23K 26/02, 26/14

US CL : 219/121.75, 121.84

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

## B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

U.S. : 219/121.75, 121.84, 121.62, 121.73, 121.79, 121.81, 121.83

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

## C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
Y	US 5,698,120 A (KUROSAWA ET AL) 16 December 1997 (16/12/97), col. 3, lines 40-60.	1-17
Y	US 5,491,318 A (SUGAWARA ET AL) 13 February 1996 (13/02/96), col. 2, lines 57-67.	1-17
Y	JP 2-235012 A (MITSUBISHI HEAVY IND LTD) 18 September 1990 (12/09/90), Fig. 1.	5-17
---		----
A		25-30
X	FR 2689254 A1 (GILLES ET AL) 01 October 1993 (01/10/93), Fig. 5A.	18, 19, 23
---		----
A		24
X	US 4,707,596 A (HOHBERG) 17 November 1987 (17/11/87), col. 3, line 45, col. 4, lines 30-35.	18, 27
---		----
Y		19-22

☒ Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.
 ☐ See patent family annex.

* Special categories of cited documents:	*T* later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention
*A* document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance	*X* document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone
*E* earlier document published on or after the international filing date	*Y* document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art
*L* document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)	*Z* document member of the same patent family
*O* document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means	
*P* document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed	

Date of the actual completion of the international search

24 NOVEMBER 1999

Date of mailing of the international search report

22 DEC 1999

 Name and mailing address of the ISA/US  
 Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks  
 Box PCT  
 Washington, D.C. 20231

Facsimile No. (703) 305-3230

Authorized officer

GREGORY MILLS

Telephone No. (703) 308-0661

 DEBORAH THOMAS  
 PARALEGAL SPECIALIST

## INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/US99/20820

C (Continuation). DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
Y	US 4,668,088 A (QUINQUE ET AL) 26 May 1987 (26/05/87), col. 5, lines 1-5.	19-22

INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION PUBLISHED UNDER THE PATENT COOPERATION TREATY (PCT)

**(51) International Patent Classification 6 :**

**B23K 26/02, 26/14**

## A1

**(11) International Publication Number:**

**WO 00/54925**

**(43) International Publication Date:** 21 September 2000 (21.09.00)

**(21) International Application Number:** PCT/US99/20820

**(22) International Filing Date:** 9 September 1999 (09.09.99)

(30) Priority Data:  
60/099,547 9 September 1998 (09.09.98) US

(71) Applicant (for all designated States except US): GSI LUMONICS [US/US]; 19776 Haggerty Road, Livonia, MI 48152-1016 (US).

**(72) Inventors; and**

(75) **Inventors/Applicants (for US only):** HERMANN, Gerald, F. [US/US]; 34415 Fairchild, Westland, MI 48186 (US). LEYBZUN, Mark, S. [US/US]; 1710 Commerce Pines Circle, Commerce, MI 48390 (US).

(74) Agent: WEINTRAUB, Arnold, S.; Plunkett & Cooney, P.C.,  
Suite 3000, 505 North Woodward, Bloomfield Hills, MI  
48304 (US).

**(81) Designated States:** AE, AL, AM, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BR, BY, CA, CH, CN, CU, CZ, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KP, KR, KZ, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, MD, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, NO, NZ, PL, PT, RO, RU, SD, SE, SG, SI, SK, SL, TJ, TM, TR, TT, UA, UG, US, UZ, VN, YU, ZA, ZW, ARIPO patent (GH, GM, KE, LS, MW, SD, SL, SZ, UG, ZW), Eurasian patent (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European patent (AT, BE, CH, CY, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE), OAPI patent (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).

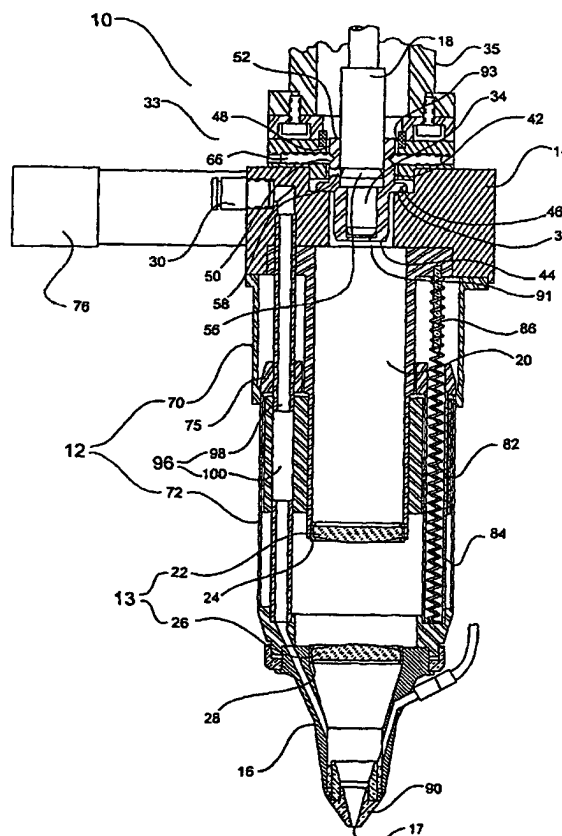
**Published**

*With international search report.*

(54) Title: ROBOTICALLY OPERATED LASER HEAD

**(57) Abstract**

A laser cutting or welding device, the device having a laser head (10) and a robot (35), wherein the laser head is attached to the robot (35). The laser head (10) has a housing (12), a focal lens (26) disposed within the housing and a light source (18) in optical communication with the focal lens (26). The housing (12) has a nozzle with a tip (90), the tip having an exit port (17). The laser head (10) has means (33) for adjusting a light path of a light beam directed from the light source onto a focal optic to center a focusing beam formed by the focal optic coaxial with the tip. In one aspect hereof, the laser device has a crash avoidance system.



**FOR THE PURPOSES OF INFORMATION ONLY**

Codes used to identify States party to the PCT on the front pages of pamphlets publishing international applications under the PCT.

AL	Albania	ES	Spain	LS	Lesotho	SI	Slovenia
AM	Armenia	FI	Finland	LT	Lithuania	SK	Slovakia
AT	Austria	FR	France	LU	Luxembourg	SN	Senegal
AU	Australia	GA	Gabon	LV	Latvia	SZ	Swaziland
AZ	Azerbaijan	GB	United Kingdom	MC	Monaco	TD	Chad
BA	Bosnia and Herzegovina	GE	Georgia	MD	Republic of Moldova	TG	Togo
BB	Barbados	GH	Ghana	MG	Madagascar	TJ	Tajikistan
BE	Belgium	GN	Guinea	MK	The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	TM	Turkmenistan
BF	Burkina Faso	GR	Greece	ML	Mali	TR	Turkey
BG	Bulgaria	HU	Hungary	MN	Mongolia	TT	Trinidad and Tobago
BJ	Benin	IE	Ireland	MR	Mauritania	UA	Ukraine
BR	Brazil	IL	Israel	MW	Malawi	UG	Uganda
BY	Belarus	IS	Iceland	MX	Mexico	US	United States of America
CA	Canada	IT	Italy	NE	Niger	UZ	Uzbekistan
CF	Central African Republic	JP	Japan	NL	Netherlands	VN	Viet Nam
CG	Congo	KE	Kenya	NO	Norway	YU	Yugoslavia
CH	Switzerland	KG	Kyrgyzstan	NZ	New Zealand	ZW	Zimbabwe
CI	Côte d'Ivoire	KP	Democratic People's Republic of Korea	PL	Poland		
CM	Cameroon	KR	Republic of Korea	PT	Portugal		
CN	China	KZ	Kazakstan	RO	Romania		
CU	Cuba	LC	Saint Lucia	RU	Russian Federation		
CZ	Czech Republic	LI	Liechtenstein	SD	Sudan		
DE	Germany	LK	Sri Lanka	SE	Sweden		
DK	Denmark	LR	Liberia	SG	Singapore		
EE	Estonia						

# INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.  
PCT/US99/20820

## A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC(6) : B23K 26/02, 26/14

US CL : 219/121.75, 121.84

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

## B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

U.S. : 219/121.75, 121.84, 121.62, 121.73, 121.79, 121.81, 121.83

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

## C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
Y	US 5,698,120 A (KUROSAWA ET AL) 16 December 1997 (16/12/97), col. 3, lines 40-60.	1-17
Y	US 5,491,318 A (SUGAWARA ET AL) 13 February 1996 (13/02/96), col. 2, lines 57-67.	1-17
Y — A	JP 2-235012 A (MITSUBISHI HEAVY IND LTD) 18 September 1990 (12/09/90), Fig. 1.	5-17 — 25-30
X — A	FR 2689254 A1 (GILLES ET AL) 01 October 1993 (01/10/93), Fig. 5A.	18, 19, 23 — 24
X — Y	US 4,707,596 A (HOHBERG) 17 November 1987 (17/11/87), col. 3, line 45, col. 4, lines 30-35.	18, 27 — 19-22

☒ Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C. ☐ See patent family annex.

* Special categories of cited documents:	*T* later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention
*A* document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance	*X* document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone
*E* earlier document published on or after the international filing date	*Y* document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art
*L* document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)	*A* document member of the same patent family
*O* document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means	
*P* document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed	

Date of the actual completion of the international search

24 NOVEMBER 1999

Date of mailing of the international search report

22 DEC 1999

Name and mailing address of the ISA/US  
Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks  
Box PCT  
Washington, D.C. 20231

Facsimile No. (703) 305-3230

Authorized officer

GREGORY MILLS

Telephone No. (703) 308-0661

DEBORAH THOMAS  
PARALEGAL SPECIALIST

# INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.  
PCT/US99/20820

## C (Continuation). DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
Y	US 4,668,088 A (QUINQUE ET AL) 26 May 1987 (26/05/87), col. 5, lines 1-5.	19-22

## PATENT COOPERATION TREATY

PCT

COMMUNICATION OF  
INTERNATIONAL APPLICATIONS

(PCT Article 20)

From the INTERNATIONAL BUREAU

To:

Assistant Commissioner for Patents  
United States Patent and Trademark  
Office  
Box PCT  
Washington, D.C. 20231  
ETATS-UNIS D'AMERIQUE

in its capacity as designated Office

Date of mailing:

17 August 2000 (17.08.00)

The International Bureau transmits herewith copies of the international applications having the following international application numbers and international publication numbers:

International application no.:

PCT/US99/20820

International publication no.:The International Bureau of WIPO  
34, chemin des Colombettes  
1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland

Facsimile No.: (41-22) 740.14.35

Authorized officer:

J. Zahra

Telephone No.: (41-22) 338.83.38

## PATENT COOPERATION TREATY

PCT

COMMUNICATION IN CASES FOR WHICH  
NO OTHER FORM IS APPLICABLE

From the INTERNATIONAL BUREAU

To:

WEINTRAUB, Arnold, S.  
Plunkett & Cooney, P.C.  
Suite 3000  
505 North Woodward  
Bloomfield Hills, MI 48304  
ETATS-UNIS D'AMERIQUE

Date of mailing (day/month/year) 16 August 2000 (16.08.00)	
Applicant's or agent's file reference LUM-100-A-PC	REPLY DUE see paragraph 1 below
International application No. PCT/US99/20820	International filing date (day/month/year) 09 September 1999 (09.09.99)
Applicant GSI LUMONICS	

1. ☐ REPLY DUE within \_\_\_\_\_ months/days from the above date of mailing
- ☐ NO REPLY DUE, however, see below
- ☒ IMPORTANT COMMUNICATION
- ☐ INFORMATION ONLY

## 2. COMMUNICATION:

\* The applicant in respect of the above identified international application is notified that the receiving Office (RO/US) has corrected the International filing date.

\* The applicant in respect of the above identified international application is notified that the receiving Office (RO/US) has stamped an incorrect international filing date on the first page of the request and has now informed the International Bureau of the corrected date

Please correct all notifications previously sent by the International Bureau to indicate the correct filing date of: **9 September 1999**

instead of: 13 September 1999

A copy of this notification has been sent to the receiving Office (ROUS), the International Searching Authority (ISA/US) and the designated Offices concerned.

The International Bureau of WIPO 34, chemin des Colombettes 1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland	Authorized officer Catherine Massetti
Facsimile No. (41-22) 740.14.35	Telephone No. (41-22) 338.83.38



US 0978697903P1



Creation date: 15-08-2003  
Indexing Officer: AKABIA - ABDUL KABIA  
Team: OIPEBackFileIndexing  
Dossier: 09786979

Legal Date: 13-04-2001

No.	Doccode	Number of pages
1	M905	1 ✓

Total number of pages: 1

Remarks:

Order of re-scan issued on .....